



4579/B

H. xxix. s

19







41703  
G. 111

THE  
EARLY SPREAD  
OF  
CIRCUMCISION.

BY  
THE RIGHT HON.  
SIR GEORGE HENRY ROSE.

LONDON:  
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY;  
SEELEY, BURNSIDE, AND SEELEY, FLEET STREET;  
J. NISBET AND Co., BERNERS STREET.  
1846.



LONDON :

C. J. PALMER, PRINTER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

THE  
EARLY SPREAD OF CIRCUMCISION.

---

*London, July 15, 1846.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN submitting to the public a very humble attempt to draw attention to a source of evidence of the truth of the Mosaic Record, perhaps hitherto not sufficiently attended to, I prefer giving it the epistolary form, as the most familiar, and therefore the most suitable to a small work wholly devoid of pretensions. If I address these pages to you, I can truly say, that if no personal feeling led me so to do, I should have done so under a sense of the peculiar fitnesses, under which it is especially desirable that such a letter should be brought under your eye.

The restless ingenuity of infidelity has derived an argument against the truth of the Mosaic Revelation, from the mention made by Herodotus, and other Gentile writers, of Circumcision prevailing amongst the Egyptians, which the German neologists, and the other impugnors of Holy Writ, were sure not to allow to fall to the ground. They

*To the Rev. Dr. A. M'Caul,  
&c. &c. &c.*

would have us conclude, that the sons of Jacob, a pastoral family, whose occupation it was to keep their father's flocks, and who, when received in Egypt, were found fitting for no nobler functions than those of herdmen of Pharaoh's cattle, although the brothers of his powerful first minister, would very easily and naturally be induced to adopt a rite very generally prevalent in the land which sheltered, fed, and adopted them as subjects, and where letters, arts, sciences, and a high degree of civilization, had then very long prevailed.

Now there is no intention to attempt to contravert this statement of the Greek writers; and Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson supports it by telling us, that "the antiquity of its institution (that of Circumcision) is fully established by monuments in the upper and lower country, at a period long anteedent to the Exodus and the arrival of Joseph." But, be this as it may, the Christian can rest his proof of the prevalence of this rite in ancient Egypt upon that which is to him of still higher authority, but existing where it probably has been little sought for, or supposed to exist. We have not to concede to infidelity the small triumph of having to assert, that we owe this discovery of Egyptian Circumcision, in the first instance, to the accuracy of the delineations traced by a Gentile, the so called "father of history," and that we seek for it in vain in the pages, from which perhaps we may have expected to derive this knowledge, which he communicates. And this point is the more to be insisted on, because the Christian expositors of the Bible seem to have paid but little attention to an important fact, which is now to be brought to view, that the Holy Scriptures, in their perfect truth and ingenuousness, have thrown a distinct light upon this subject, to the benefit of those who have eyes to see. This fact is, that those Scriptures signified the observance of Circumcision by the Egyptians long before the birth of



Herodotus, the earliest Gentile historian who mentions it. The knowledge of that observance in Egypt is afforded by Jeremiah, who, in the last of his prophecies, refers to an event which took place in his time, in the year 588 before Christ,—the final captivity of Judah in Babylon; and by Ezekiel, whose latest prediction bears the date of the year 574 before Christ;—whereas the birth of Herodotus was in the year 484 of that era, that is, ninety years later than the latest of those dates.

The following passage is found in Jeremiah, (ix. 25, 26 :) “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them who are circumcised, with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”

The impression conveyed by this passage, when it is duly considered, decidedly is, that the nations enumerated in the following order,—Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, &c.,—were circumcised in the flesh, but not in the heart. The declaration of the future punishment of the circumcised, and of the uncircumcised, is first, and especially addressed to the former. It is as if it was said, that they, the circumcised in the flesh, but uncircumcised really, that is, in the heart, whether Gentiles or Israelites, shall suffer, together with those upon whom this physical rite has not been performed.

The enunciation of the cause of this punishment of the enumerated nations at the end of the verse leads us to conclude, since the circumcised are particularly threatened, and as the house of Israel was circumcised, that they all, who are named, as well as the Hebrews, employed the fleshly circumcision. They are named, as if it were promiscuously

as Gentiles, or not, in order thus: "Egypt, Judah, Ammon, Moab, &c."

But be this as it may, whether Edom, and Ammon, and Moab, and "all that were in the utmost corners, that dwelt in the wilderness," were circumcised, or not, it is perfectly clear, as the circumcised are mentioned before the uncircumcised, and as Egypt is mentioned even before Judah, who, we know, was circumcised, that it is to be understood from these verses, that the Egyptians, in Jeremiah's day, were nationally circumcised. But as Edom, Ammon, and Moab, were kindred nations of the Israelites, Edom descending from Abraham and Isaac, and Ammon and Moab from Lot, there is every probability that they were then circumcised.\*

The last verse of the 31st chapter of Ezekiel, is as follows:—"To whom art thou thus like in glory, and in greatness, among the trees of Eden? Yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth; thou shalt be in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God."

Then follows the 32nd chapter. In the verse just cited, that is, the 18th of the 31st chapter, it is said, that Pharaoh and all his multitude are to lie in the nether parts of the earth in the midst of the uncircumcised; and the sentence upon Egypt pronounced in the 19th verse of the 32nd

---

\* These observations were written without the knowledge, that Professor Jahn, in his *Biblical Archeology*, refers to this passage in Jeremiah, (ix. 25. 26,) as well as to Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo, to prove the circumcision of the Egyptians. But he enters into no argument to demonstrate, that the conclusion here derived is to be drawn from it, nor, which is singular enough, does he make any reference in the same view to Ezekiel, (xxxi. 18, xxxii. 17 to 32;) although as an inveterate and thorough-paced ecologist, he is desirous of establishing the observance of that practice in Egypt.

chapter, is, that she shall “go down and be laid with the uncircumcised.”

In the 27th verse it is declared, that Egypt “shall be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised; and shall lie with them that are slain with the sword,” for Egypt is here referred to. (See verses 18, 19.) And again it is announced in the 32nd verse, “that Pharaoh, and all his multitude, shall be laid in the *midst* of the uncircumcised, with them that are slain with the sword.” These repeated expressions, that the Egyptians should be laid in the midst of, or with the uncircumcised, in the manner specified, tend plainly and naturally to the conclusion, that they were circumcised.

There is a clear distinction marked in these two chapters of Ezekiel, between those who were to lie with, or in the midst of the uncircumcised, (xxxi. 18 ; xxxii. 19, 27, 28, 29, 32,) and those who were to lie uncircumcised, and which refers to circumcision alone, and places these two classes in opposition to each other, and shews, that one used that rite, and that the other did not, and therefore that the Egyptians used it.

If all the nations of the earth but one small people were uncircumcised, why should it be particularized, that one of those nations going down to destruction should be laid in the nether parts of the earth with the uncircumcised ? This, however, might be said to be only a presumption, though a strong one. But there is another feature in the 32nd chapter, which leads to a certain conclusion which is to be derived from its contents, that the Egyptians were circumcised. There will be found in it two descriptions of nations, who are to be cast down into the pit ; of the first are the Egyptians, and Edom, her kings, and all her princes ; these are there to lie with the uncircumcised ; of the second are the

“ strong among the mighty,” who are gone down uncircumcised, or lie as such slain by the sword ;—of these are “ Asshur, and all her company ;” “ Elam, and all her multitude ;” “ Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude ; the Prince of the North, all of them, and all the Zidonians.” Now Edom received circumcision as an Abrahamitical nation ; therefore he lies *with* the uncircumcised. The Zidonians lie uncircumcised ; and Herodotus tells us, that the Phœnicians, of whom they were, had left off that rite, since their intercourse with the Greeks.

And here we find a clear distinction made between those who are to lie in the pit with the uncircumcised, and those who are gone down thither uncircumcised, and who lie there as such ; if the former had been uncircumcised, it would have been said plainly that such they were ; they would have been put in the class to which they belonged. So that there can be no doubt entertained, that those of the first class are otherwise circumstanced as to having been subjected, or not, to that rite, than those of the second, who were, we are told, uncircumcised ; that is, that those of the first class, the Egyptians and Edomites, observed it. As to the Edomites, it was natural that this rite should long prevail amongst them, as they descended from Isaac, the child of promise, who, the first of his race, was circumcised on the eighth day, as well as from Abraham ; and we know, that they were for a considerable time subjects to the kingdom of the twelve tribes, and then to that of Judah.

It is thus clearly deduced from these passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that the Egyptians were circumcised at the time when those prophets wrote, and that they plainly signify it.

But it surely cannot be deemed a forced construction, if an intimation of the existence of that practice amongst the



Egyptians at the time of the Exodus is to be deduced from these words addressed by Moses to the Almighty :—" Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me ?" (Exodus vi. 30.) The expression of " uncircumcised lips " is figurative, but it could not be used here in propriety of language, unless circumcision itself was considered by Pharaoh as a requisite to remove imperfection, and unless he himself had received it. It is as if Moses expected that Pharaoh should object to him, that his lips were uncircumcised ; it is as if he had said, " Pharaoh will regard my lips as uncircumcised, and therefore impure in his sight and estimation."

Let us now consult Herodotus, who in his second book, *Euterpe*, states, that the Egyptians circumcised themselves for cleanliness' sake ; and he conjectures, that the Colchians were of Egyptian origin, " because," as he affirms, " the Colchians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians, are the only nations who have been circumcised from time immemorial."

He adds, that the Phœnicians and Syrians of Palestine confess, that they learnt circumcision of the Egyptians, and that the Syrians, who inhabited the banks of the Thermodon, and Parthenon rivers, and the Macrons, their neighbours, admit, that it is not long since that they learnt it of them ; that certainly there are no other people who are circumcised ; and that it is by it principally, that they are recognised as Egyptians ; that the usage having been very ancient amongst the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, he cannot say which of them took it from the other, but that it is probable, that the Ethiopians learnt it in Egypt, when they began to frequent the Egyptians, whilst on the contrary, the Phœnicians had left it off, and had lost the custom of circumcising their new-born children, since they had intercourse with the Greeks, as has been already stated.

But as the Israelites will of course have been classed by Herodotus amongst the Syrians of Palestine, it should be remarked, that those Israelites assuredly never confessed that they had learnt circumcision from the Egyptians. Their sacred record, whose authority they have in no age or time questioned, not only gives the date of it long before they went into Egypt, as an heavenly institution, a covenant with God, with all its circumstances and conditions. One single consideration establishes the entire superiority of the claim of Israel to the origin of circumcision in the person and the family of the father of the faithful. We are told of nations assuming that rite in imitation of others, but the cause of the imitation of an operation involving pain and humiliation has not been assigned. Now the statement in the Old Testament of the adoption of circumcision is complete ; in its perfect honesty and truth it tells all the facts ; who ordained it, and to whom, and when and why it was ordained, and what inducement was held out for the observance of it. Now not one of these essential things is put forward by, or in the behalf of any circumcising people, excepting the Arab, and he entirely confirms the Israelitish claim, for his account of the whole matter is absolutely the same as that furnished by the book of Genesis, for he believes it.

Bruce, the celebrated traveller, offers in substance the following just remarks upon the use made of these passages in Herodotus to the disadvantage of the Mosaic record :—  
“ Who knows that Circumcision was older than Abraham’s day ? What writer can be produced as near the era at which it begun, as Moses was to Abraham’s day ? ” “ Till this is done, it is not necessary to argue in support of Moses against Herodotus, or to inquire who Herodotus’s circumcised Egyptians and Phœnicians were.”

But as infidelity again renews its objections, a motive may be found for adverting again to this matter, citing facts which throw an useful light upon it.

As this peculiar rite is painful and humiliating in itself, its nature is such, that although nations may have adopted it in imitation of others, it is difficult to conceive, that the first people, or family, who received it, could have done so otherwise than under what they received as an heavenly injunction; and this is precisely the origin of it declared in the Scriptures. We read in Genesis, (xvii.) that God, in one act, established an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his seed, and gave to him, and to them, the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and that this covenant was the circumcision of the males born in his house, whether of his seed or not, or purchased strangers, to be performed on the eighth day after their birth; and that the uncircumcised child was to be cut off from his people, as having broken God's covenant.

Fear, hope, and gratitude, therefore, all combined to make this rite binding on the Israelites, to whom indeed it was as their title-deed to the land of promise. Farthermore we are told, that when this rite was performed on that same day on Abraham, and all his family, Ishmael was then thirteen years old, that is, in his fourteenth year.

We find the renewal of this law of circumcision in Leviticus, (xii. 3.) The Almighty thus again commanded the observance of this rite by the Israelites. But, when ordaining it, he gave no reason why he selected it preferably to any other sign, since one it appears was to be given; and as it was in his own image that he created man, the Christian will not easily imagine, that there was any reason of physical improvement connected with this process.

But to the Hebrew, submission to it was the assurance of the promised inheritance, the neglect of it, death; and under

such most powerful cogency of motives, he has adhered to it under all circumstances of weal or woe, from Abraham's day to the present, with a short-lived neglect of it however in practice, whilst in the desert, and which will be adverted to. And here, it may be observed, that the account given by Josephus of the institution of circumcision is inconsistent with holy writ; it is "That God commanded for distinction sake between the race of Abraham and other nations (with whom there was to be no intermixture) that all his posterity should be circumcised at eight days old, not only for the distinction aforesaid, but for some other reasons also hereafter to be declared." But in this statement the historian is in nowise borne out or justified by holy writ. The Lord, according to the Book of Genesis, assigns no such motive for his command as Josephus represents for enforcing circumcision, or indeed any motive but one. (xvii.) God declares that he will establish an everlasting covenant with Abraham, and his seed, with various blessings, one of which is the gift of the land of Canaan to perpetuity. God then requires that Abraham and his seed shall keep his covenant, and says, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: every man child among you shall be circumcised; and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." (Verses 10 and 11.)

God, therefore, declares circumcision to be the token of the covenant on the part of Abraham and his seed;—"and this is the token of that covenant,"—a visible sign of it. After this the rite is ordered to be performed on the male child when eight days old, and on all males born in the house, or bought with money; and thus Ishmael was circumcised, being then thirteen years old; but whilst God declared that he would bless Ishmael in various ways specified, he said,—“But my covenant I will establish with Isaac,” which



Sarah should bear unto him, (Abraham) "at that set time in the next year."

The article of the Mosaic law prescribing this rite was, it is true, re-enacted at Mount Sinai; but the circumcision of Moses's son by Zipporah, and the circumstances which led to it, would alone shew that it was wholly obligatory in his day before the Exodus.

It is well to be observed that circumcision is a national feature in the question of the eternal right and title of Israel to the land of promise, and of the certainty of her return to and re-occupation of it. These marvellous blessings are secured to him by frequent promises from God, who, moreover, has thus deigned to give him the security of a covenant. (Genesis xvii. 7—11.) The Lord declares to Abraham that he gives to him and to his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and that he will be their God. It was to be an everlasting covenant; and God declares it to be, "that every man child of you shall be circumcised." Let us see Israel astounding in its revolt against God, neglecting his laws, denying his triune essence, and crucifying his Son, rejecting the ordinances of heaven, or utterly losing them, and scattered over the whole globe, and yet holding tenaciously to that rite with marvellous perseverance, and so retaining its title deed to the land of his fathers. The circumcision of the Jew is the assurance of his restoration.

We see abundant reason, therefore, why the Israelite should accept and observe this rite; and when God, that he might save a world overwhelmed in idolatry and sin, and accomplish his everlasting purposes of justice, wisdom, and mercy, set apart a chosen race, a nation of priests, guardians of his oracles, and of whom the Redeemer was to be born after the flesh, we can well understand, that in order

to keep them separate from the unholy nations, as was indispensable for the fulfilment of their mission, and to humble them to a spiritual mind as he did by the forty years wandering and fast in the desert, (Deuteronomy viii. 2, 3 ; xxix. 5, 6,) a mark of separation should be applied by a painful and humiliating process, to which our Lord himself in the flesh was submitted.

That this process also signified purification, and the putting away corruption and filth, is made abundantly clear by passages in the Old and New Testaments. It was before the Exodus that Moses said to God, as has been already observed, " Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me ?" In Deuteronomy, Moses addresses thus the Israelites : " Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." (x. 16.) The Lord, in Leviticus, when speaking in supposition of future offenders of the Israelites, says thus : " If, then, their uncircumcised hearts be humbled." St. Paul says, " Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." (Rom. ii. 28.) And, when speaking of Jesus Christ, in his Epistle to the Colossians, he thus expresses himself : " In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ."

Thus this command of the rite by the Almighty, and this obedience to the command by the Israelite, are completely intelligible, and consistent with the whole of the Mosaic dispensation, and explain equally its origin, the time of it, and its maintenance.

But, with respect to this rite as existing amongst the Egyptians, we neither know, as has been observed, either from them or from others, when or why it originated, why it was ordained, why it was observed ; as little do we know

when or why it ceased amongst them. It may be remarked, that had it been really adopted for the reason stated by Herodotus, its cessation would be unintelligible, because cleanliness is always valued and cultivated by a people in proportion to their advance in civilization.

Now whilst no reason has been assigned by those who trace the Israelitish in the Egyptian circumcision, why the latter should have ever existed, unless they take Herodotus's, a reason can be assigned why the Egyptians may have received it from the Israelites. No country was so fertile as Egypt in monstrous gods, in religious practices varying in different cities, in degrading modes of worship, in most foul rites, as history records. Why then may she not, with far better reason than she had for many other observances, have accepted as an usage, we cannot admit as a law, (for such it was not,) a rite considered as sacred and indispensable by the wonderful stranger, Joseph, a man eminent for his holiness, the son-in-law of one of their priests, the bride having been bestowed on him by the hand of Pharaoh, the depositary of his unlimited authority, and by whom it was most fully and freely exercised, but under whose administration the sacerdotal order retained their lands, whilst others were compelled by the dearth to sell theirs to the king, the favourite of Heaven, to whom had been miraculously revealed the secrets of dreams, and through whose wisdom and inspired forecast the nation was saved from exterminating famine. And when his family came, and was settled amongst them under the protection of the sovereign, the Egyptians will have farther learnt that this observance was no creation of Joseph's imagination, that his father and his brethren all knew, that they held their lives on the tenure of this prescribed observance. Those Egyptians will necessarily have learnt

the existence, and nature, and obligations of the rite, when they beheld him consecrate his sons to the God of his fathers through it, that their lives might be preserved, although they were born in Egypt, and of an Egyptian mother. When they saw him, wonderfully gifted and preserved as he was, thus holding to this rite as a bond between his God and himself, that he dared not break, how easily can we understand that a superstitious people, who had seen a miraculous interposition of heaven in their behalf made through him, should imagine the condition of the selection of him to have arisen in part from his being a member of a family, which, having adopted it, held to it inflexibly with respect to their sons who were born in Egypt, as of heavenly origin and enforcement.

As Joseph became first minister to Pharaoh about 1,230 years before the birth of Herodotus, the intervening lapse of years was fully sufficient to render the origin of the rite obscure in Egypt, if connected with no great religious or political cause; but none such has been assigned; and if the Egyptians had no urgent and permanent cause for observing the rite, it is natural that, in the lapse of years, and under foreign conquest, which always, more or less, influences the usages of nations, they should relinquish it as they did, especially as their Persian conquerors had never adopted it. But as to the adoption of the rite, the history of the Hivite Shechemites shows how easily a people might be persuaded to assume it in the youth of nations. In a more advanced stage of civilization, it was only the sabre of the intolerant Mahometan that enforced circumcision on the nations which he subjugated to it.

If the Egyptians did remember its Israelitish origin, their priests, after the triumphant Exodus of the Hebrews, would not have been very willing to avow that recollection; but



the Israelites, who had no cause to conceal its origin, declare it, and have adhered to the observance of it for above 3,700 years.

These considerations have been brought forward to shew that if the question simply is, whether the Israelites borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians, or the Egyptians from the Israelites, how high is the probability that it had an Hebrew origin. But it is far rather to be supposed that a larger is the truer view of the whole question.

Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson tells us that the antiquities of Egypt present undeniable proofs that circumcision prevailed there long before the migration of Jacob and his sons into the land of Ham. Let this be so; and let us consider whether there is evidence at hand corroborating the scriptural, that whilst Israel did not receive this rite from Egypt, it did receive it on divine authority, that on that authority, as declared to Abraham, it was first promulgated to mankind and adopted; that Egypt did not receive it from the descendants of Abraham, and yet may have received and practised it long before their reception in the kingdom of Pharaoh.

When Israel effected its miraculous escape out of Egypt, its males, who were born in the desert, remained uncircumcised until the nation passed the Jordan; and as the law enjoining circumcision to them had been re-enacted in the wilderness, this neglect evidently formed a part of that general disobedience to the commands of God, which, as Moses told them shortly before his death, had marked the whole of their conduct during their forty years of wandering in the desert. It may be conjectured, that if the Egyptians were then circumcised, the Israelites had an intelligible though wholly unjustifiable motive for this particular refractoriness in their hatred to their late tyrannical masters, and in a repugnance

to bear a peculiar mark in common with them; and a period of rebellion against God, and his servant Moses, passed in a land which was not that of promise, would naturally be a time at which this refusal would be the most likely to occur. And when their faith was so weak in God's promises of that land, that they refused to go up and occupy it, at that time the rite assuring them the possession of that land would probably have had little value in their eyes. But we see that as soon as they had commenced the re-occupation of the glorious inheritance of their fathers, and had dedicated themselves to the service of God, and had bowed to his law, they felt the full benefit of the covenant of circumcision under which they held that land, dreaded the penalty of disobedience, and at once, by a national act in the plain of Gilgal, resumed the observance of the neglected or rejected rite. When, in the desert, they had once thrown it off, it is difficult indeed to discover any motive whatsoever, except religious obligation universally understood and felt, that could have induced them to submit themselves by choice and free-will to an observance to which our nature must always repugn, and then, it should appear, unpopular, and beginning to be obsolete; for it is to be remembered, that they, who were circumcised in the plain of Gilgal, were the whole of the males of the nation born in the Desert.

But a most important body and feature of evidence on this subject should now be brought prominently into view. There is a witness in this case of the highest and most ancient authority, who speaks by his works and their results, as seen to this day over a large portion of the globe. He deposes thus most fully and distinctly to the correctness of the Mosaic statement of the original transaction. He is the Arab.

The wonderful dispensation of God regarding the Israelite and the Arab, and their relation to each other, as well as their separate dooms, affords some of the most striking corroborations of the truth of the history given in the Pentateuch. The Arab believes firmly in all the events there recorded; and his new religion recognises them. He has never moved from the immediate vicinity of the scenes of them. He is of an unmixed race. He points out where Moses sat, where Aaron was buried. In Oman he speaks of the Israelite as the son of Sarah, and of himself as the son of Hagar;\* all the circumstances, which constitute the highest credibility in a witness, are united in him. But respecting circumcision, he bears a stronger and fuller testimony to the Mosaic record respecting it than perhaps has yet been suspected.

The student of the Bible may not easily comprehend why, since circumcision was a condition made by God with the seed of promise, of their everlasting possession of the land of Canaan, it was required that Ishmael, who was to have no part in it, should undergo it; moreover, knowing that in that most economical record no unnecessary word or mention of facts is to be found, he may not be able to comprehend, why it is told us, that Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, that is, in his fourteenth year. The decisive testimonies in favour of the divine origin of circumcision, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, which are to be derived from these circumstances, although they may not all be at once intelligible, lead us to a distinct conjecture of motives why the inspired writer was moved to give Ishmael's age when circumcised, and of a cause why he was comprehended in this ordinance; for at the time when God ordained circumcision, whilst He blessed Ishmael, and pro-

---

\* See Wellsted's Travels in Arabia.

mised to make him a great nation, he declared that he would establish his covenant with the then unborn son of Abraham and Sarah, of which circumcision was the seal; and Abraham and his son by Hagar and his whole family were circumcised on the same day.

Now it is remarkable that the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, should have adhered inflexibly to this rite as well as the descendants of Isaac, though no promise of reward for so doing was given to them; but it was, sooner or later, renounced by all the other Abrahamitic progenies. But as the covenant was not with Ishmael and his seed, the Arabs adopted as the time for the performance of the rite not that which was prescribed, but that at which their ancestor received it. And Josephus, who wrote in the reign of Vespasian, informs us, that "the Arabians were not circumcised till the thirteenth year as Ishmael was." And thus, although the Arabs circumcise at various ages, it is in the fourteenth year in some places still that it is performed.

There can be no doubt that they were the Arabs, the great navigators of old in the south-east African and western Indian Seas, to whom the observance of the circumcision found in the islands, on the coasts, or in the neighbourhood of those seas is to be ascribed. Whence else was it to come? who had the means to diffuse it and a motive so to do? When the Arabs procured its adoption, they brought the nations who would receive it into a proselytism, into a common bond with them, a matter of no small interest with those adventurous traders.

It is a curious evidence of the spirit of proselytism to circumcision existing from of old amongst the Ishmaelites, that whilst Mahomet, who was one of them, did not prescribe it, but only spoke of it as an immemorial usage which would of course be followed, they have most rigor-



ously enjoined and enforced it, wherever the Koran has been received, making it the initiatory right of its believers, and an indispensable one.

It is to them alone that the origin of the circumcision and other marked usages of Abraham's family and day, amongst others abstinence from swine's flesh, found amongst the Caffer nations lying immediately to the north-east of our colony at the Cape of Good Hope, is to be attributed. And it is remarkable that Mr. Shrewsbury, a Wesleyan Missionary, and Mr. Campbell, a missionary of the London Missionary Society, when speaking of circumcision as universally prevailing in those tribes, the first says, that it is practised on all youths at about the age of thirteen; and the other, who shows how indispensable it is, tells us that the males must have entered on their thirteenth year before it is performed upon them. Mr. Campbell gives an instance of a king who had reached manhood, but had not been allowed to wield the sceptre in a Caffrarian tribe, because he had not submitted to circumcision; and his authority was exercised by his uncle as regent in the meanwhile.

It must be undoubtedly from that same source that the inhabitants of Mindinao, one of the Philippine islands, derived this usage before their adoption of the Koran. Dampier, who passed some time there, tells us that the boys are circumcised at "eleven or twelve years of age, or older;" and that whilst he was there the ceremony was performed on a nephew of the king, who was then "about twelve or fourteen years old."

There is a singular trace of Arabian religious usages of the highest antiquity to be found in an island to which the Arabs must have been constantly resorting in their commercial voyages from very early ages, Madagascar. The circumcision prevailing there has led apparently some, who have written on that island, to the supposition that it has

been introduced there by the Mahometans ; but this is not the case, as the most authentic modern accounts of that country testify. The Koran has never been the religious law of its natives, though the Arabs there of course hold to it. Amongst other authorities should be prominently cited that of Robert Drury, an Englishman, who was shipwrecked in the year 1701 on its coast in early youth, and was fifteen years a prisoner there ; and his account of the land and its inhabitants has obtained and appears to deserve complete credit ; he utterly denies the existence of Mahometanism, except amongst the Arabs there, and details fully the nature of the deplorable superstitions by which those islanders are governed, as is now but too well known. But he is much struck with the similarity of many of their usages to those of the Jews, who no doubt had them in common with the early Arabs, from whom Madagascar unquestionably received them. He tells us, amongst other things, that circumcision is indispensable, and celebrated with great festivities, though performed at no prescribed age ; he speaks of the contempt attaching to eaters of swine's flesh, the separation of the woman at certain periods, and of the seventh day being one of rest for slaves, though not as a religious observance.

Mr. Campbell, the missionary, speaking of the Malgashes, as the natives of Madagascar are called, says that " Circumcision is common throughout the island : on such occasions there is a feast, the neighbours are called, and a sacrifice is killed." His picture of their heathenism is very striking ; it is wholly unmixed with Mahometanism. He tells us that ill-omened children are exposed to the beasts. Indeed it is known that the people drive their cattle over them. And thus Drury states, respecting their superstitions as to unlucky days and years, that " numbers of poor children who are born on Sunday and on Friday are privately

murdered." Their practice of circumcision is in complete unison with that found in the neighbouring opposite coast of Africa.

Possibly it may be objected to the supposition that the Caffers are indebted to the Arabs for circumcision, that the former do not now occupy any part of the coast, which was within the probable limits of the early navigators of the latter. Dr. Vincent, in his very able and learned work on the *Periplas of the Erythrean Sea*, in which he shews that the Arabs were the first who navigated it, expresses his conviction, that, terrified by the fearful currents which prevail near Cape Corrientes, so called after them, varying according to the monsoons in the Mozambique Channel, that did not pass that promontory, which is in about six degrees of southern latitude on the south-east coast of Africa. But even if this be true, and if the Caffers are not now found immediately on the sea-shore so far to the north, it would nowise disprove their adoption of circumcision from the Arabs. It is only two degrees to the south of that cape that a tribe of Caffers attempted in great force to murder in the night a detachment of Captain Owen's people when he was surveying the coast. The Caffers moreover are traced as having in former times occupied territories to the north and the east of their present possessions. Wars of ambition and aggrandizement have evidently led to great migrations of their tribes, as has happened of late, and probably is happening now. A pastoral but warlike people, whose riches consist entirely in cattle, migrates easily; and these Caffers may have been constantly tempted to wander to the south through the fertile and well-watered regions which lie to the southward of their earlier seats. There are now Caffers to the north of Sofala, which, being in nineteen degrees south latitude, is five degrees to the north of Cape Corrientes.

But circumcision exists extensively on that coast amongst

other inhabitants of it. Captain Owen says, that "the rite peculiar to the Jews (circumcision) is generally adopted by the better sort of Negroes along the coast;" and this applies to them where they are heathens; the Mahometans must of necessity observe it universally. Where the Negro tribes cease, the Lowhylese occupy the coast to the north of them, and again the Soomallies (to whom the murderous Dunkalli belong) join them, and possess the country following the sea-shore up to the Red Sea, occupying loosely the ancient kingdom of Adel. No European probably can speak of the usages of these wild hordes with authority equal to that of Dr. Krapf, so distinguished by his missionary labours, and his extensive and dangerous journeys in Eastern Africa, and his most able and successful labours in its languages. Writing from Mombas, which is on the coast in  $4^{\circ} 4'$  south latitude, amongst the Lowhylese, he informs us, that having visited a most degraded tribe, the Wakumbas, he found that "they practise circumcision;" adding, "as do most of the East African tribes." This refers evidently to such as have not received the Koran, since, as has been remarked, where it is received, this rite is a matter of course. As to the Wakumbas in particular, it appears that they are especially opposed to Mahometanism, because it forbids to eat pork, which, with monkeys, is the food the most coveted by them. But it may be observed with respect to the Dunkalli just mentioned, that although as Mahometans they necessarily practise circumcision, there is a great probability that they observed it before they received the Koran. They are one of the eastern African tribes, and therefore probably adopted it when it became general amongst those tribes; and we learn from Mr. Johnston, who passed through their country in 1842, that they practise circumcision so late as from the sixteenth to the eighteenth year; a circumstance pointing to theirs being originally of early Arabian origin.



The Arabs navigated those seas for the purposes of trade, but attempted no conquests, or to penetrate into the interior ; and thus we see that the circumcision on that coast, with the exception of Abyssinia, is littoral, testifying to its origin. Thus it is unknown to the Gallas who occupy so vast an extent of inland Eastern Africa, though living between circumcised nations. The original circumcision of the Abyssinians entered from Tigre on the coast of the Red Sea brought by the Arabs ; the modern is Jewish. Thus to this practice of the early Arabian navigators, of introducing circumcision in the lands to which they traded, a curious testimony is given in the statement made by Bruce,\* that the Abyssinians of Tigre, the province nearest to the Red Sea, say, (vol. iii. 4to. p. 340 ;) that they received circumcision from the Ishmaelites, with whom they were connected in their maritime trade. It appears from Bruce, that the other inland provinces of Abyssinia believe that they adopted the Israelitish rite very many ages later from their king Menilek, the son of Solomon, when the nation assumed Judaism, which it retained until it received Christianity. And all the Abyssinian Christians still retain it. But Abyssinia is the Ethiopia of the ancients, spoken of by Herodotus as having practised circumcision from time immemorial, as well as the Egyptians. Now from Menilek's accession to the birth of Herodotus, little more than five hundred years elapsed.

Respecting the Arabs, another remark, and an important one, suggests itself. We, in this very age, see the Jew

---

\* As to Bruce's authority, it should appear that he at times exaggerated, and even invented, to magnify his consequence, achievements, and hardships, or to create astonishment, but that he is a faithful and useful narrator of facts, where these inducements to err did not exist.—See Burckhardt's *Travels in Lybia*, Gobat on Abyssinia, the life of Salt, and Captain Owen's *Voyages*.

circumcising on the eighth day; and we discover distinct traces of the Arabs circumcising, and introducing circumcision to be performed, in, or about, the fourteenth year; and we thus find these nations, so long separated, but descending from brothers, thus giving powerful evidence, by their respective practices, to the respective periods of life at which their ancestors received the rite in their persons, according to the Mosaic record, to which this very remarkable support is thus afforded.

It might here be assumed that the existence of Arabian circumcision on the coasts of seas visited by the sons of Ishmael has been demonstrated to be sufficiently extensive to give the amplest support to the Mosaic record on this head. But what shall we say when we learn that God, having laid bare all the nations of the earth, modern discovery having lifted up the veil which concealed most extensive regions from our sight, a vast extent of new evidence is afforded, by peoples, and tongues, and nations, unknown to our fathers; that the rite as performed upon the son of Hagar is practised largely by the barbarous savages of Australia, who are an homogeneous race, and also in the Polynesian family, also an homogeneous people, who in their numerous islands hold in loose occupation so immense a tract of the Northern and Southern Pacific.

It is a most remarkable circumstance that Captain Flinders discovered the observance of circumcision in the barbarous natives of the gulf of Carpentaria, at the eastern extremity of the north coast of Australia. These people, no doubt, must have learnt it in old times of the Arabs, or of the Malays, who certainly must have received it from the Arabs; but if of the Malays, it must have been very long since, as the latter, if they had originally known that land, had long forgotten, and had only made its acquaintance in

these times about twenty years before Flinders met them there, they being then in search of the Trepang, or sea cucumber; and it is certain that they had not communicated this rite at that time to the natives, for they were on no terms of intercourse with them. But more recent discoveries in Australia have led to the knowledge of a far larger prevalence of circumcision in that country than Flinders could ascertain, but having undoubtedly the same origin. He says that the natives of Caledon Bay "are the same race of men as those of Port Jackson and King George's Sound, places at nearly the two opposite extremities of Terra Australis." But Flinders, who was there in 1803, states that all the natives of Caledon Bay appeared to have undergone circumcision.

The following statement is from an officer who was some time in the interior of our eastern colony at New South Wales, living at Moreton Bay, which is six hundred miles to the north-east of Sydney, in twenty-seven degrees of southern latitude, and in longitude a little to the eastward of Sydney. Travelling from Moreton Bay to a distance of about two hundred miles, in a north-north-westerly direction, he saw strange natives, who no doubt came from the Gulf of Carpentaria, calling it "the Great Sea." All their men were circumcised. But it is to be remarked, that he further then observed, what is a distinct indication from what people this rite was originally derived;—he only saw it amongst the adults; the boys were untouched; and, he adds, "it forms one of their numerous rites in 'Kipper,' or 'man-making, that is, initiating the boys into the mysteries of a warrior's life.'" "From the fact of this tribe knowing the Gulf of Carpentaria, I have no doubt that they belong to the Carpentarian tribes described by Flinders, for circumcision does not exist in Moreton Bay, or in tribes immediately located there, or to the southward."

It is very remarkable, with respect to circumcision performed as evidently of an Arabian origin, but unconnected with Mahometanism, that in two countries in which it is found most distant from each other, Caffraria to the west, and the Gulf of Carpentaria to the east, it forms one of the observances which constitute the transition of the adult males into the state of manhood with the privileges attached to it.\*

Flinders, finding from personal observation that circumcision prevails amongst the natives of Caledon Bay, of Isle Woodat, and at the Melville Islands, supposes it to be general on the west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria. But this indefatigable investigator of the coasts of New Holland tells us, that no such practice was found in the south or east coast, or in the islands of Torres' Straits. (vol. ii. p. 198, 212.) But to go beyond what thus has been partially and locally observed respecting circumcision as prevalent in Australia, it should be said that there are facts and considerations connected with it, and bearing materially on the subject in hand, which should be brought into view as regarding the existence of this observance, such as it is to be found in various parts of this continent; and no more elaborate and faithful picture of the customs and ceremonies of the aboriginal Australians can be resorted to than that given in Mr. Eyre's recent work—his "Journal of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia."

Speaking of the initiatory rites imposed amongst almost all the tribes upon the young, through which they must pass from one stage of early life to another, until admitted to the privileges and rights of manhood, he says, "In the Gulf of Carpentaria, the rite of circumcision is performed; at the

---

\* See Campbell.



Swan River, King George's Sound, and nearly three hundred miles to the eastward of the latter place, no such rite exists. Round the head of the great Australian Bight, and throughout the Port Lincoln peninsula, not only is this rite performed, but a still more extraordinary one is enjoined with it. Descending the east side of Spencer's and St. Vincent's gulf, and around the district of Adelaide, the simple rite of circumcision is observed. Proceeding but a little further to the banks of the Murray and its neighbourhood, no such ceremony exists; nor have I ever heard of its having been observed anywhere on the south-eastern or eastern part of the continent."

He tells us, on the authority of Mr. Moorhouse, that in the Adelaide district, there are five stages to be passed through before the native attains the rank of a Bourka, or "full-grown man." At from twelve to fourteen years of age, the third stage is entered by having the ceremony of circumcision performed." He enumerates various strange prefatory observances, and then adds, that "the operation is performed by men who are supposed to be inspired, or sorcerers." Here are circumstances well to be remarked,—that the age of the patient embraces that of Ishmael, that the rite is performed separately from every other, and that the fact of the operators of it being men held to be inspired or sorcerers shews that some idea of religion, if such this people can be said to have, or of superstition, or of something preternatural is attached to it; and this is also denoted by a passage in a song of the Adelaide tribe. It is "a curse or imprecation used in hunting a wild dog, which, by the mysterious effects of the words, is induced, it is supposed, to lie down securely to sleep, when the natives steal upon and easily kill him." One of the verses runs thus;—"Strike him with the blood of circumcision:" we find this blood, therefore, made part of an incantation.

The most accurate and extensive researches lead to the certain conclusion that the natives of Australia have a common origin ; and scattered over the vast surface of that continent, as they are in the wildest state, the fact that many of the tribes speak languages unintelligible to each other nowise disproves it. They are very thinly dispersed over a country of which by far the greater part, as far as it is yet known, is scarcely habitable, a desert of salt and "scrub-wood," and which appears to have emerged, comparatively of late, from the sea, whilst the cultivable coasts were probably islands in the southern Pacific or Indian Oceans. Experience shews that dialects speedily change in nations whilst composed of elements constantly in separate action, and loosely held together, and where writing is unknown. Thus the Swedes, the Austrians, and the Dutchmen, are unintelligible to each other, though really speaking dialects of the great Teutonic tongue. The best-founded conjecture as to how Australia was peopled, is that its first inhabitants located themselves on the north-west coast between 12° and 16' latitude south, not far from the Spice Islands, of which Tunor is the nearest to it, and that they moved thence in three main divisions, from which, whilst there were in their progress innumerable offsets made to the right and to the left, descends the whole of the Australian aboriginal population. And it is remarkable that it is considered as so evident that the Australians must have brought circumcision with them to that continent, that the existence or ignorance of it in different points of this vast land is used as a material indication of the direction of the march of these different divisions, and of the lines of their progress in taking possession of the several districts which they occupy. The proofs that they were originally one people are overwhelming : we should therefore truly conclude, on learning that very many tribes

know it not, that they originally had it, but abandoned it whilst wandering separately. But it is prevalent in the country the most distant from that where they probably first landed, both widely and in a shape exceeding that in which it is practised in other districts where it prevails. There is nothing to surprise us in a barbarous people immensely scattered, so much so that their tribes are even now singularly strange to each other, that usages should be lost, in long and most painful peregrinations; and that rites, especially if painful and inconvenient, should be abandoned. Thus in Tahiti, Cook found circumcision universally prevalent as a rite between seventy and eighty years ago; and now it has disappeared. In New Zealand and the Sandwich Islands it is unknown; in the Feejee Islands it is complete and universal; in the Friendly Islands it is imperfectly performed. Yet all these islands of the northern and southern Pacific are peopled from the same stock.

The supposition as to the course of population is, that after landing in Australia on its north western coast, somewhere about the point indicated, its first inhabitants broke into three divisions, one following that and the western and much of the south-western coast. Circumcision is found in the ground on which it is assumed they first landed; we are devoid of information how far it obtains along the north-western and western coast: but it is known that at the Swan River, King George's Sound, and Cape Arid, there is no trace of it. But if the south coast is followed from the head of the great Australian Bight for six hundred miles, then it is found to be universal and practised in a manner which might have accounted for the abolition of it. It extends here therefore from the head of the great Australian Bight along the coast eastwards beyond Adelaide, and throughout the Port Lincoln

peninsula. It is then conjectured that the second division went down from their north-western landing place to the south-eastern extremity of the great Australian Bight, moving on directly across the continent, and retaining circumcision. The third division is supposed to have gone down from the south-east Bight of Carpentaria towards Fort Bourke on the Darling River, and to have branched off to the westward in many subdivisions, following the various rivers which flow into the sea, on the eastern and south-eastern coast; which is by far the most fertile country of the whole continent. It is presumed that they occupied the eastern, south-eastern, and part of the southern coast of it, and that they early lost the practice of circumcision; but that they did not abandon it universally is evident from Flinder's own statement, and from that of the officer already quoted. But it is to be carried in mind here that wherever this observance is found amongst this people so wonderfully dispersed over a vast surface of the coast, it is every where practised about the same age; and that age is about that when Ishmael was subjected to it,—a coincidence most remarkable, and in itself greatly conclusive as to the origin of it.

Languages, rites, usages, modes of life, their whole physical existence, their arts, for such they have for procuring food, and it may be said in their amusements, their vices even testify decidedly to their being an homogeneous race, scions from one stock. Yet there are diversities in all these things, except perhaps in their bodily qualities, which show how long and greatly their several divisions and subdivisions have been, in innumerable instances, separated from each other in this immense and (except by Europeans latterly) uncultivated territory. Then let us take the mass of the nation into view, and consider when we see at what distant points circumcision is found to prevail, and again not to



prevail, with vast intervening spaces, and then determine whether it is possible, in any calculation of chances, to come to any other conclusion than that this observance, everywhere practised about the same age, and rigorously and publicly enforced and practised where known, was one common to the whole parent stock on their first landing on the shores of Australia. But even if this very reasonable inference is denied, there, at any rate, stand the immutable facts of circumcision existing and being so practised and enforced in a vast extent and in different points of this new continent.

As to the Polynesians, the inhabitants of their islands, whether single or in groups, are so identified with each other by language, though in many dialects, by physical form and appearance, and by rites and customs, as to leave no doubt of their close common relation; and their language also proves their Malayan origin. As to circumcision as prevailing in them, we learn from Mariner, who was detained many years as a captive at the Friendly Islands, and whose book is of high authority, that it is there performed in an imperfect manner, but that at the Fecjee Islands, that land of horrible cannibalism, which he visited, and which lies at about one hundred and twenty leagues to the westward of Tongatabuco, it is practised amongst the males exactly in the same form as it is by the Jews, and moreover at fourteen years of age.

But Cook informs us, in his last voyage, that he found circumcision at Tahiti; and his authority is wholly indisputable, although the rite is said to be no longer observed there, disappearing probably before the influence of Christianity. The age, at which it was observed, testified to its Arabian origin. Captain Cook tells us, that a reproachful epithet attached to those who omitted it; and that the phy-

sical operation was performed exactly upon the principle received in Israel, though not so completely; and that they employed it "from a notion of cleanliness;" but from what he says the act evidently had a religious character. He tells us that when five or six boys were pretty well "grown up," they were put into the hands of a Tahona, a man of knowledge, who took them to the top of the hills, attended by a servant, and there performed the operation. They then returned home, having their heads and parts of their bodies adorned with odoriferous flowers, the Tahona being rewarded by their fathers.

These scattered tribes probably adopted the practice before they first sallied forth from their Malayan ancestral hills. Dispersed wonderfully indeed as they are, they could not possibly have learnt it from each other. They must have received it from the Arabs, meeting and visiting their fathers probably in their eastern voyages.\*

There may be a question whether circumcision reached the Philippine Islands, the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the Feejee Islands immediately from the Arabs. It is admitted, that the Arabian navigators went as far east as Ceylon, but it is not equally clear whether they sought in the coun-

---

\* Not to omit a notice of circumcision apparently existing where neither Mo-saism or Mahometanism ever prevailed, it may be mentioned that Sir Alexander Mackenzie, in his first attempt to reach the Pacific from Canada, saw some Slave Lake and Dogrib Indians in a high northern latitude, of whom he tells us that "whether circumcision be practised amongst them he cannot say, but the appearance of it was general amongst those whom he saw." But we must admit the entire improbability of a rite of Israelitish or Ishmaelitish origin reaching such a people so situated in the centre, and nearly in the worst climate and most secluded spot of that vast continent. Even Adair, in his earnest and elaborate, but fruitless, attempt to prove the Hebrew origin of the American Indians, does not allege any existence of circumcision amongst them, or even any trace of it.

tries to the north and east of that island the merchandize of their produce, which they wanted for their commerce, or whether they met the Malays at Ceylon, or possibly on the western coast of India, and obtained it of them.

The Chinese cup, bearing an inscription in letters of that people, found amongst relics of high Egyptian antiquity, attests a commercial intercourse existing mediately or immediately between China and Egypt. But the circumcision of the north-eastern Australians, and of the Feejeeans, adds to the probability of the Arab navigation having extended far beyond Ceylon. The spirit of proselytism to circumcision, which so strongly possessed the Arabs, to a rite in fact to which seemingly no visible gain commensurate to their exertions was attached in their case, may well be supposed to have been implanted in them for heavenly purposes. But however strong was this spirit in them, they appear to have made no converts to that rite in India, whose western shores they certainly visited, whether they did or not its eastern; and this circumstance tends to confirm the presumption that this vast region, soon peopled and civilised after the dispersion of mankind, was pre-occupied at a very early day by the two religions prevailing in its native tribes at this day, that of Boodh and that of Bramah.

Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, in his important work on the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians, says, "Circumcision was a rite practised by them from the earliest times." He then gives the words of Herodotus; "Its origin, both among the Egyptians and Ethiopians, may be traced to the most remote antiquity. But I do not know which of those two people borrowed it from the other, though several nations derived it from Egypt during their intercourse with that country." Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson afterwards adds, "We are ignorant of the exact time or age fixed for its performance by the ancient Egyptians."

“ St. Ambrose says the fourteenth year ; but this seems improbable, and it was perhaps left to the option of the individuals, or of their parents, as with the Moslems.” “ Though very generally adopted, no one was compelled to conform to this ordinance unless initiated into the mysteries, or belonging to the priestly order. But if the law did not peremptorily require it for every individual, custom and public opinion tended to make it universal. The omission was a reproach.”

Thus we learn that, amongst the ancient Egyptians, circumcision was not enjoined by any law, was not a religious obligation incumbent on the profession of the religion of the country, unless on those initiated in certain mysteries, or belonging to the priestly order. But we know not why he should treat the assertion of St. Ambrose, that it was performed in the fourteenth year, as improbable ; one sees not why belief is not to be yielded to a man eminently pious and able, when stating a fact easily known to him. Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson thus tells us, that its observance was alone required in persons in certain mysteries, and of the priests ; now for such initiation and ordination, if it be so called, the fourteenth year was surely a sufficiently early age.

But there is this probability attaching to the fact, that it most curiously harmonises with the time, or very nearly, at which this very rite is practised to this day by various people at vast distances from, and wholly unconnected with, each other, and was received by Ishmael. But first amongst them, the most authoritative, should be named, the modern Egyptians, who, it is to be supposed, perform the rite as their ancestors did.

Mr. Hoskins, in his splendid work, his “ Travels in Ethiopia,” informs us, that in Dongolah circumcision takes



place when the boy is four or six years old, when the friends and relations of the family assemble, bringing with them presents of horses, cows, oxen, corn, money, &c.; that in Egypt they often postpone this ceremony till the child is twelve or fourteen years of age; but that in Dongolah the family gains so large a sum by it that they seldom or ever delay it so long.

It is truly wonderful to see a rite, to which mankind must be naturally repugnant, prevailing amongst the Gentiles, and nowhere connected with the religion of the country, and over so vast a surface of the earth, and amongst nations so different in every respect from each other, and not holding to each other by descent or commerce, the Caffers, and the other non-Mahometans of the south-eastern coast of Africa, the inhabitants of Madagasear, of the Feejee Islands, and of the western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria; and all observing it, and many, we know, in adolescence, although we are not informed of the age at which it is performed in some of those nations. This extraordinary concurrence not only removes improbability from St. Ambrose's statement, but gives a high degree of probability to it. Sir J. G. Wilkinson says that the Mahometans (that most bigoted people) circumcise at any age.

Since it is evident that the Arabs must have been in the early ages the great propagators of circumcision, and practised it at the time of life when Ishmael received it, there is now a probability shewn that the Egyptians may have adopted it from them. And we learn from Bruce, that in Abyssinia, the ancient Ethiopia, a tradition prevails in Tigre, its most maritime province, that when its inhabitants dwelt in the mountains of Habad, and before they settled in Tigre, they assumed circumcision from the Arab sailors, and that the rest of Abyssinia received it from them.

Now, according to Herodotus, it was uncertain which nation communicated circumcision to the other, the Egyptians, or the Ethiopians. If the Ethiopians gave it to Egypt, and had it themselves from the Arabs, the Egyptians derived it mediately, not primarily, from those Arabs, and not from the Israelites. Sir J. G. Wilkinson, already quoted, says, that "the antiquity of its institution in Egypt is fully established by the monuments of the upper and lower country, at a period long antecedent to the Exodus and the arrival of Joseph." Now if Egypt received circumcision from the Arabs, and not from Israel, a higher date of its reception by them is at once accounted for.

But in all this matter there is this material observation again to be made. Amongst none of all these nations of antiquity conforming to circumcision does it appear engrafted or interwoven in the religion of the country, however rigorously its practice may have been required. It has evidently been assumed as a habit or fashion, and has taken strong root by prescription or imitation.

But as a rite with the Israelites, it is connected with their whole spiritual and temporal existence. Their having the Lord as their God, and their everlasting possession of the land of Canaan, are inseparably connected with it, and by the hand of the Almighty. They can show the all-wise motives under which the Almighty ordained it; and those causes which are in perpetual action upon their minds to lead them to retain it; to them it is a patent of pre-eminence, of national pre-eminence; the absence of it in other nations has drawn down their scorn from the earliest ages. The loftiest monarch in Europe is despised by the Jew boy who pursues you through the mud with oranges and pencils, and by the itinerant bearded old-clothes man. The poten-

tates, who hold their seats of imperial power on the Neva and the Danube, are, in their sight, "uncircumcised Philistines." They know that no other nation can show whence and why they originally had it, or why they retained it, except the Arabs.

On Herodotus's statement, that circumcision was borrowed either by the Egyptians of the Ethiopians, or by the latter from the former, which leads us to suppose that he considered it as having originated with one of these two nations, this may be observed, both on that statement and on the opinion which he expresses, that the Ethiopians were the borrowers. Visiting Egypt and not Ethiopia, it must be held as certain that all he would have seen and heard will have tended to give strength in his mind to claims to originality and high antiquity of usages advanced by the former people; that, proud and intolerant as the Egyptians were, it is entirely to be presumed that, where anything was admitted by them as doubtful between the pretensions of another country and their own in practices, the presumption is against their right. Now we find from Bruce, as has been stated, that the Abyssinians, the former Ethiopians, do not pretend to have devised this rite, but have a tradition that they first received it from the Arabs; and there is everything to give probability to this tradition, and to obviate suspicion as to its truth. But on the whole, whilst the Egyptians may have received the rite directly from the Arabs, or more probably indirectly from them through the Ethiopians, it is to be presumed that they derived it from one of those two nations rather than from the Israelites, who lay no claim to having introduced it into Egypt.

As to the age for performing the rite now, Chardin, speaking of the Persians, says, that "there is no fixed time for cir-

cumcision ; some require it to be performed at thirteen years, because Ishmael was circumcised at that age ; others require it to be at the age of nine years, because we then become capable of knowing good and evil. It is generally administered at five or six years old, in order that the operation may be the less painful."

Bruce, as to the epoch of circumcision in Abyssinia, says " that it is not done at any particular age," and this seems to militate against the opinion that its natives adopted it originally from the Israelites ; and more so, as he tells us that " the Abyssinians of Tigre say that they received it from Ishmael's family and his descendants, with whom they were early connected in their trading voyages." These people, therefore, give a distinct account from whom they received the rite, and how it happened.

Herodotus's Egyptians, who knew not whether the rite went first from Egypt to Ethiopia, or came from thence to Egypt, thus avowed their ignorance both of the cause and source of it ; and faith on this ground is also evidently due the rather to the Abyssinians, whose country is part of the ancient Ethiopia.

From all the facts stated, it appears that in general amongst the nations which practise circumcision, the Hebrews excepted, as far as any limits of time for performing it can be assigned, it varies from about the sixth to the fourteenth year, that at which Ishmael received it. This looseness of period in itself denotes an absence of religious origin, except amongst the Arabs ; and as with them it had not a permanent religious cogency, and was not a covenant, we are not told that his descendants were required to perform it at any particular age.

But he and the Israelites are witnesses for each other for the ages at which the ancestors of each nation received



the rite. As to causes of a spread of circumcision, the Arab had a motive for propagating the rite; the Israelite had strong motives, and amongst others a perpetual one, for not propagating it, as it might act as an extension to other nations of the title-deeds to Palestine thus conveyed to him. The Arabs will have been proud of the rite as a heavenly ordinance derived from their ancestor Abraham, the friend of God. There was evidently a great spirit of proselytism in them respecting it, as is evinced by their having spread it on every shore which their commerce and navigation reached; and there could be no cause why they should be less anxious to extend it to Egypt than elsewhere. But did Israel propagate it? Under the bad faith with which two of the sons of Jacob required the adoption of this rite by Hamor and his people, that fact will not be alleged as an instance of the Israelites seeking to introduce it amongst the Gentiles. But that history affords a proof of the early existence of that rite in Israel long before it went into Egypt; and the less suspicion can be thrown on the truth of the narrative of it, as it explains to us a remarkable circumstance in the history of the sons of Jacob, that is, why, as it appears by the allotments of land to the several tribes, those of Levi and Simeon were "divided in Jacob" and "scattered in Israel." It was in punishment for the cruelty which they exercised to avenge their sister; and the use they made of the circumcision of Hamor, his son, and his people, proves that they acted under no spirit of proselytism in requiring a rite which they must have rendered hateful, whilst they caused themselves to be feared and detested by their Gentile neighbours. They required it indeed as a mean not of proselytism, but of extirpating those who assumed it. This history is an ample demonstration, not only of circumcision existing



in Israel long before Jacob entered the kingdom of Pharaoh, but of its being inseparably interwoven in its annals; and it gives evidence to their truth. It was for the bloody revenge practised by Simeon and Levi that Jacob, on his death-bed, cursed their anger, and dealt with them, as has been stated, as to their future territories. The whole narrative of the transaction is circumstantial; and it was in the war which arose on the sanguinary deed of these two sons of his, that Jacob took "with his sword and with his bow," the district which he gave to Joseph as "one portion" above those which he assigned to his brethren.

There is a view respecting circumcision which bears materially upon the question, which will not be agitated here, whether the Afghans are or are not the lost ten tribes. If the ten tribes have renounced circumcision during their long exile, they have forfeited their title-deed to the land of Canaan; but we know that they cannot, have not, and will not do so, as multiplied passages in Scripture prove, because the promises of their re-union with the two tribes in that land, with a perpetual occupation of it, are multiplied and explicit; it suffices to refer to those contained in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel in proof thereof (15—28). But to have that title-deed clear and valid, the ten tribes, as well as Judah and Benjamin, must have practised that rite from its institution to the present time, as ordained to Abraham; and those ten tribes must be sought for in some people exactly so circumstanced; they can be no other. Now the Afghans stated distinctly to Sir Alexander Barnes, that they are the ten tribes, in which assertion the neighbouring nations concur, and that they followed the Mosaic religion until their conversion to Islamism. Thus they never renounced circumcision. The Abyssinians, as we have seen,

received circumcision from the Arabs or from the Israelites, and the Rechabites adopted it from that latter people. The Arabs, then, are the only known people who, besides the Jews and the Afghans, received the rite from its foundations, and hold to it until this hour. There is no ignorance or wildness of speculation that would convert the sons of Ishmael into Israelitish exiles transplanted into Media. We must therefore seek for them exclusively in some people which shall never have renounced circumcision from the first, and shall still be in the practice of it, a condition which extremely narrows the search; indeed it might be said to conclude and determine it at once.

Bruce, living for many years amidst circumcised and uncircumcised nations, states positively that in Abyssinia, where the rite prevails amongst the Christians as well as amongst the Mahometans, no one pretends that the practice first arose from any physical cause or advantage whatever; that none of the reasons alleged for it in Europe is ever heard of there; and that he does not believe them to have the smallest foundation anywhere. He admits that nations may have adopted it through imitation, but maintains that the original adoption of a process painful, humiliating, and at times dangerous, can be attributed but to powerful motives of reward assured, or of punishment threatened; and he argues in support of the Mosaic record of the origin of the observance with reasonings, and upon facts, which are well worthy of being considered. (Vol. iii., chap. 12, 4to. edition.)

But there is an early mention of Egypt in the Bible in connexion with circumcision which should not be passed over. When the whole of the males of Israel, except Joshua and Caleb, who had undergone the rite before the Exodus, were circumcised after entering the Holy Land in the plain of Gilgal by the command of God, "The Lord said unto

Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." As to the meaning of the expression, that by the circumcision of Israel in the plains of Gilgal the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from off it, it seems that with respect to it both the Jewish rabbis and Christian divines are divided in opinions, nor does it appear that any one is wholly satisfactory. So far seems to be sure, that the national circumcision at Gilgal removed some ground of reproach made to the Israelites by the Egyptians respecting that rite; and the best chance of attaining the real meaning of the passage will be afforded by a review of the circumstances respecting this matter, in which the two nations then stood. Intermixed as they must have very long been in Egypt, each must have been aware how the other was circumstanced with regard to circumcision, that it prevailed universally amongst the Hebrews, and nearly so amongst the Egyptians. Whatever was the source or motive for Egyptian circumcision, those masters of the Israelites could not fail to know when and why they, the Hebrews, performed it; their whole personal, national, spiritual, and temporal weal attached to that observance. Degraded, enslaved, and idolatrous as the Israelites were at last in Egypt, we know that they held to that rite so firmly that all the males who came out of it were circumcised. (Joshua v. 5.) It is rendered evident to us, that, in spite of idolatry, the Israelites kept earnestly in mind their promised spiritual and temporal blessings whilst in Egypt, by what occurred the instant they had escaped from it through the divided waters. It was on the shore of the Red Sea, which was strewed with the dead bodies of their enemies, that Israel, the whole nation, led by Moses, raised its memorable song of triumph and of the praise of God. In it these passages so instructive upon this subject are found: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salva-

tion ; he is my God, &c." " The people shall hear and be afraid, sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine, &c. ; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them ; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over, Oh ! Lord, till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountains of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thine hands have established." (Exodus x. 3, 14, 15, 16 and 17.) We here learn, not only that Israel was aware that it was destined to conquer and possess Palestine, but that its inhabitants were so likewise ; and it will be seen that the terrors of the nations occupying that land were to begin as soon as they heard that the Hebrews had passed through the waters. Now these things must have been equally well known to the Egyptians. But what of the consequences promised by this exulting commencement of Israel's national career did Pharaoh's subjects behold ? Although their recent dreadful chastisements would terrify the Egyptians from molesting the Hebrews in the desert, we cannot doubt that they will have watched them closely. Their reproach on all Israel as to circumcision, as universally abandoned, which could only be removed by the whole nation undergoing it, shews that the Egyptians knew that it was in its totality affected by it, that not a male had undergone it since the Exodus, as was the fact. (Joshua v. 5, 6.) Then, when the Egyptians beheld the Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years, deterred from returning into the land behind them whence they had escaped, and apparently not daring to invade the land before them which they claimed as their own, not even fulfilling the condition on which it was to be theirs, as if afraid of engaging themselves thereby to attempt its conquest, how



naturally might those Egyptians contrast in bitter sarcasm the exulting song of triumph and of menace against Canaan, with which the shores of the Red Sea had resounded, with the terrors which appeared to prevent their attempting to subdue the Canaanites. These terrors and this cowardice would be imputed to them as alone sufficiently accounting, not only for their wandering thus long in a barren, howling, and burning wilderness, with no visible object, rather than claim their heritage by the sword. But it was their very dereliction of their title-deed to it, by their abandonment of the rite of circumcision, which would be especially flung in their teeth as a proof of their being a vile and timid race, faithless to their God, and to their high destinies, a reproach the last to be omitted by a circumcised people, a people also who had seen the wonders of the mercy of the Almighty testified at their own expense in behalf of Israel, and who had been compelled, as to the God of Israel, "to know that he was the Lord."

It is the remark of one who should be eminently quoted as authority in such a matter, that the words of Moses, to be found in his prayer to God, in Deuteronomy, chap. ix. (v. 26—29), indicate the apprehension which he entertained, lest, during the long sojourn of Israel in the wilderness, it should be imputed by the Egyptians to the Lord, that he was unable to bring them into the land which he had promised to the Israelites, and that he had brought them out into the wilderness to slay them because he hated them. These fears of Moses, thus expressed to the Lord, shew how hostile to Israel, as he apprehended, would be the construction put by the Egyptians on the delay of the occupation of Palestine by the Hebrews. And this proves the jealous observation exercised by the Egyptians of the transactions of the Hebrews in the desert.

God commands Moses to speak thus to the Israelites:



“ I am the Lord your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do.” (Leviticus xviii. 2, 3.) The Israelites, therefore, assuredly knew what doings in Egypt were of Egyptian origin, and what were not, if they had any in common ; otherwise, assuredly this ordinance would not have been issued. If circumcision was of Egyptian origin, under this law it was prohibited. Their omission of it in the desert was only a part of that universal rebellion against God, in which they passed their forty years of sojourn in the desert, with which Moses reproached them. (Deut. ix. 7.) They knew well that without it they could not hold the land of Canaan, and attempted no warlike operations against that land, until they had submitted themselves to it.

The Israelites found less in Egypt probably than in any other country to weaken the recollections of their own, and of their predicted restoration to it. The Egyptians were an exclusive people. Even their public inscriptions were so contrived as to be wholly unintelligible to other nations. Moreover, they detested shepherds, and the Israelites were such. In Joseph’s time the Hebrews were placed apart in the land of Goshen ; and even at his board his brethren were fed separately from the Egyptians. The separation was made complete, when the ruling people enslaved the weaker, and murdered their male children. An original remembrance, well kept in mind by the Hebrews, was that of the oath to Joseph to carry up his bones from Egypt when God should visit them, which they dutifully fulfilled.

Even if we suppose Moses to have been an impostor, he never could have done anything to lead the Hebrews to believe that circumcision was of Egyptian origin, or other than one peculiarly imposed in them by God after his narrative of the performance of that rite on his Son, under an especial heavenly intervention compelling it.

But it is evident, how carefully the Israelites treasured up in their memories during their long residence in Egypt whatever related to their existence in the land of Canaan. They were brethren, descendants of one man, who, early in that residence, made tribes of the descendants of each of his sons with peculiar destinies, and the memory of that transaction, and of what he then foretold and ordered, they never lost. The division in tribes and the genealogies of the family were distinctly recorded. Now, be it observed, that Jacob, in that very transaction, his benediction of the tribes upon his death-bed, a scene which must have been most deeply impressed on their minds, dwelt upon deeds of cruelty practised by two of his sons, through a fraudulent imposition of circumcision, addressing himself to the doers of it, and marking it with his malediction.

There is still another view of the question of circumcision thus so largely introduced by the Arabs, which, jointly with that of two other observances, is well worthy of investigation, and the more so as, respecting their origin, in one of them it is holy, in the two others it is unholy. And yet they all three combine in giving testimony to the veracity of the Mosaic record. That truth, which is exhibited in the oldest writings of his inspired servants, God has caused to be vindicated through the newest of geographical discoveries in the uttermost parts of the earth, when it has pleased him to lay it open to the nations.

The shores of Australia were but grazed by the Dutch, and then by Dampier. And the sagacious and indefatigable Cook, who drew great attention to that country, had not time or opportunity to inform himself largely as to the moral state and modes of existence of its inhabitants. It was not until after our colony was established in the south-

eastern part of it that a more extensive knowledge could be obtained of its moral and physical condition. Such, however, is now in our hands to a considerable extent.

We learn that all but its geology is new, strange, and peculiar. As to its Fauna, none of the inferior animals of other regions, but the dog in its wild state, was found there. The trees are evergreen, but unknown in the other quarters of the world. Its Flora generally presents very striking anomalies. "The fossile mammalia are recognised as belonging to the order of marsupiala, a very curious evidence of the vast periods of time, during which this type has prevailed in the Australian continent. From the astralagus of one of them is drawn the evidence of a marsupial vegetable feeder as large as a rhinoceros." \*

The country, which to a vast extent is still unknown, when examined presents an immense proportion of what may be called a salt desert, destitute of fresh water to a degree which renders the exploration of it most difficult and hazardous; and this desert is partially covered by a miserable vegetation of an herbaceous brushwood called "scrubs," and seems in its present state unfit for and incapable of cultivation. The greater part of this land appears to be lifting itself up slowly from the sea, from which the hilly or mountainous parts of the coast may have stood up as islands in ages long since past. The population is a race of black men, not recognised in language or appearance as belonging to any of the known tribes of the earth. They are not ill-grown, but their features are displeasing. Morally, the Australian is not destitute of some redeeming qualities, and he is brave; but still he is a miserable barba-

---

\* See Quarterly Review, September, 1845, p. 516.

rian. His gluttony is excessive. He is the tyrant of his women, who are consequently an over-worked, degraded, and stunted race. Both sexes are extremely licentious; but the lover, to obtain his wife, exercises extreme brutality and ferocity in so doing. We learn from Captain Grey and Mr. Eyre, that the young life of a beauty presents generally a series of captivities, wandering in strange families, rapid flights, &c.; that many a female is carried off several hundreds of miles from her home; and that it is rare to see a form of grace and elegance that is not scarred by the furrows of old wounds. Infanticide is so general, especially among the young and favourite women, that it is calculated that not more than two out of five children are reared; the others are rejected as an impediment or inconvenience. Cannibalism exists too in this country, though to what extent is not ascertained. Their sorcerers, in order to be initiated in this self-elected office, must have fed once on the flesh of a child, and once on that of an old man. They are supposed to exercise a most malignant power; and deaths imputed to their machinations are to be expiated by perpetual blood-sheddings and endless contests. But even in cannibalism the Australian has his peculiarities. He practises it upon principles somewhat unintelligible, whatever scope we may assign to the depravity of the unreclaimed man. The New Zealander eats his enemies, and so does the Fecjeean; and revenge as well as appetite seems so be the propeller to it with them, as well as wherever else it is found. But the Australian dines upon his friends and relations slain in battle as if through affection. His is a devouring grief. A most horrible instance of it, fully authenticated, and taken from a paliammentary paper, is to be found in Mr. Eyre's work. (Vol. ii., p. 225.) Near the Darling river the hostile tribes, after a fight, are stated to exchange with their enemies the bodies of their foes which have fallen into



their hands, in order that each party may regale on their friends. When an Australian wears clothes, it is not for purposes of decency. He shows great ingenuity in gaining his food by the chase and in fishing; and his dances, executed by great numbers, appear to have attained a high degree of perfection. But of the great, and most important of arts, the most necessary, that of extracting food from the earth by cultivating it, he has not an idea; those of digging, planting, or sowing, have never entered his brain.

In this new and strange state of things, physical and moral, infidelity could scarcely be expected to be slow in catching at it, as giving evidence of a newer creation or a later beginning of existence of man, and land, of its produce and of the animals occupying its surface, than of those of the old world. Abstaining from entering into general arguments upon this subject, foreign to my purpose, and confining myself to what is analogous to it, I wish to call attention to the fact of observances as existing amongst the Australians, which they as a nation must have derived from two other particular nations flourishing in the days of Moses, and long before them. They are three in number; and this number and their peculiarity render it impossible that this coincidence should be accidental; and it is the less possible that it should be such, as these three observances are also found in the Polynesian Islands, with which they have no communication whatever. These observances are circumcision, which prevails so extensively in Australia, and is still found in Polynesia, though prevailing there formerly more than now, cuttings for the dead, and tattooing, which is very generally practised in Australia, and when required of the women rigidly enforced. The first was originally from God, but learnt there unquestionably either directly or indirectly from the Arab, but far more probably directly, because he,



who brought the other two observances, came no doubt with the Arab. The second and third came from that fearful source, whence is the inspiration of all evil, the great enemy. And it is wonderful to see works of his made to contribute evidence to the truth of holy writ, as if compelled thereto by the Almighty hand. Thus one of the three marks of identity with the rest of the human race which the Australian bears is from the hand of God ; the two others are from the hand of Satan. With respect to the two latter, what says the word of God ? "Ye shall not round the corner of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any mark upon you. I am the Lord." (Leviticus xix. 27, 28.) And there is this farther heavenly injunction to the Israelites : "Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead, for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God." (Deut. xiv. 1, 2.) These prohibitions of course would not have been directed but against existing abuses to which the Israelites might, if unwarned, be tempted ; and they did not exist in Egypt. A great number of offences against God, many of them of the foulest and most dreadful iniquities, are forbidden in the Pentateuch, under fearful denunciation of his vengeance and decrees of punishment. These observances are in this list ; and of the whole it is said by the Lord : "Ye shall not walk in the manner of the nations which I cast out before you, for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them." (Leviticus xx. 2, 3.) It is therefore most evident that these were Canaanitish observances. There were indeed no other against which it was necessary to warn the Israelites then on their march to Syria, these observances, as has been remarked, not being Egyptian.

It should be observed, that when authorities are sought for to establish usages of the Australians and the Polyne-  
sians, the rules for seeking them as primitive differ as to these two nations. So much is still unknown as to those of the former race, that the latest accounts should be referred to; whereas, with respect to the latter, we should prefer the earlier, when given on due advisement, that of Cook especially, as since his time vast intercourse with Europeans, and the introduction of Christianity, have materially influenced their original existence, moral as well as physical. But of both these races enough has been already said in demonstration of the prevalence of circumcision as practised by them.

With respect to the Canaanitish observance of cuttings for the dead prevailing in Australia, Mr. Eyre, speaking of the burial rites which he saw performed in some of the tribes, says "that around the biers were many women, relations of the deceased, wailing, and lamenting bitterly, and lacerating their thighs, backs, and breasts with shells and flints; and the blood flowed copiously from the gashes." During a certain process with the body, "the women kept wailing and cutting themselves more violently than before." He says that "graves are frequently visited by the women at intervals for some months; and at such times the wailing is renewed, and their bodies lacerated as at the interment."

We have seen that in Leviticus it was also forbidden to round the corners of the head, and to mar the corners of the beard for the dead. But we are told by Mr. Eyre, that in Australia "mourning is performed by the men by cutting their beards and hair, &c." Now it is scarcely possible to imagine a stronger confirmation than that thus afforded to us of the similarity of certain mourning usages of the

Australians to certain of those practised by the Canaanites and proscribed by God.

As to printing any mark on the body, we find an usage prevailing in Australia, as well as in Polynesia, and called tattooing, which consists in puncturing the skin deeply, so as to cause great pain and effusion of blood, in order to introduce into it permanent colours tracing various figures; it answers correctly to the offence forbidden in Leviticus, and thus characterised as printing marks on the body. We are told that in one part of the Australian continent it is adopted, and that in another it is neglected. In the Adelaide, the most populous district, it forms the fourth stage of the rites initiatory to the recognised state of manhood at the age of twenty years. "Each tribe has a distinctive mode of making their incisions. The ceremony of tattooing is practised among the tribes of the Murray with great circumstantial variety." Among the women the back is tattooed by a very long and painful operation. With respect to these abominations before the Lord as exercised by the Polynesians, it may suffice, as to cuttings for the dead to recur, to the authorities of Cook and Mariner. Cook found the New Zealanders making frightful gashes in the flesh for the dead, precisely as at Tahiti. "The cuts in many instances greatly disfigured their face." Cook "scarcely saw any one whose body was not marked by scars inflicted for loss of relations." He says that at Tahiti, "after an interment, the nearest female relation strikes a shark's tooth several times into the back of her head. The blood flows copiously: the rest of the women follow her example," &c. "Some of the younger people cut off their hair, which is thrown under the bier." (Vol. iii. p. 235.) Mariner tell us, that at a funeral in the Friendly Islands, the people scarred their heads, and cut their flesh in various parts in honour of the deceased,

using sharks' teeth as at Tahiti, and making spear wounds within the thigh. (Vol. ii. p. 210.)

As to tattooing, it is so universally known to prevail very widely in the Polynesian Islands, that it is needless to cite authorities as to its extensive existence amongst them. It is found in their easternmost, Easter Island, so far detached from the others, and in New Zealand so distant from their various groups, and far to the south. The portrait of a New Zealand chief in Cook's second voyage testifies that it is there accepted in full vigour.

But whilst it is made evident that both the Australians and Polynesians were by some means or other, at some very early period of their existence as nations, imbued with three observances, one Arabian and two Canaanitish, it may not be easy to trace how this operation took place, on the first view of the matter. But, established, as it appears to be, that the Polynesians are of Malayan descent, it may be assumed that they must have proceeded eastward from the islands occupied by that maritime people, the Malays, to spread themselves over the North and South Pacific Oceans. And it may naturally be supposed, especially as there is no appearance of the Australians having ever been a navigating nation, that their last seats, before they took possession of the new continent, were either the Molucca Islands, or New Guinea; and in either case they would be within the reach of both the Arab and the Malayan sailor; and thus the mode, in which the circumcision of Ishmael may have reached both these nations, is not difficult to comprehend. But how were they to acquire Canaanitish evil practices? How was that poison to flow into their veins? It is true that the Phœnicians, Canaanites, emigrating into Greece, carried to her, and added to her mythological fables, several of their own when they colonized there, indeed some borrowed from



scriptural history.\* Moreover some of the superstitions of Ireland and of the Scotch highlanders of very early times are imputed to that people, as the burning the Beltane (Baal Tan) tree, and the Manksman's fire on the first of March, when the children were passed to the leeward of it through the smoke, figuring the Tyrian victims to Moloch. But they had access to these lands by their ships from the coast of Syria. But there is no trace, probably, in history of their ever having introduced the religion or usages of Canaan into the east; they had no power, or influence, or even access there by fleets in early days, or by armies ever; they certainly never navigated round the Cape of Good Hope from the westward. But awful and stupendous events took place in their country under the immediate and terrific, but most just vengeance of heaven, such as never overwhelmed any other people. God first prepared, and then sent down the Israelites as the holy instruments of his desolating wrath against the Canaanites, whose iniquities he had endured, until the measure of them was full. Then the arm of the Lord was laid bare. The walls of Jericho fell at the sound of the trumpets of the Hebrews. The sun stood still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. The Jordan had stopped its streams to let them pass into their land of promise. Great stones from heaven, and hailstones slew more of the Canaanites, in a memorable conflict, than did the sword of Israel. Their cities, fenced up to heaven, were stormed, burnt, and destroyed, their population slaughtered, even their animals extirpated; their kings were put to an ignominious death. If the Canaanites trembled at the approach of the Israelites, as foreknowing their doom, (Josh. ii. 10, 11, v. 1,) how, beyond description must have been their consternation, their bewilderment, when this unheard of destruction exploded in the midst of the

---

\* See Scriptural Researches.



devoted nation ! All, that could fly, must have fled in wild dismay to wherever a refuge could be found ;—exile and destitution will have appeared as minor evils by the side of such annihilation. Amongst the fugitives must have been crowds of the sea-faring men of the coast of Syria, whence an immense maritime trade was carried on even beyond the Pillars of Hercules ; and they were in high repute. The able seaman finds his bread, wherever there is a ship to swim, or water to float it ; and thus those of northern and eastern Europe are in great numbers in the British merchant navy, and in far greater probably in that of the United States. The Canaanites had but to repair to the nearest country, Arabia, to find an immense maritime commerce ; and there can be no doubt that the exterminating conquest of their native land drove vast numbers of them into the ships of the Arabs—the great navigators of the east. At a later day, when Solomon dispatched ships down the Red Sea, and certainly beyond it, the Syrian sailor was well prepared for the voyage ;—“ Hiram, king of Tyre, sent in the navy, shipmen who had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon,” evidently as pilots in that dangerous navigation. Thus those exiles may have very easily reached the islands, whence later the Australians and Polynesians emigrated to those new homes, which they now respectively occupy. As to the Canaanites, with their houses burnt, their lands confiscated, their relations slain, and their death certain, if they were seen in Palestine, if they would acquire, or could possess anything in the world, or even save their lives, it must have been in a new country, and not in their own. Such a country presented itself ; and there in fertile soils, and in a climate congenial to them, and where sustenance is scarcely a matter of care, is it likely that such men should resist such attractions, where everything was to be gained, and nothing to be lost ? The sight is constantly presented of

British and American Christian seamen renouncing their here, and their hereafter, for an easy, idle, and licentious life in the beautiful and fascinating islands of the Pacific. Would the attractions, which ensnare them, have less power over the reckless sensual Canaanites, such as they are described in Holy Writ? But these Syrians were of a race of men, who, inhabitants of a highly cultivated land, lofty cities, and of a nation possessed of an immense commerce and navigation, must have been far advanced in civilization, infinitely so beyond that of the fathers of the Australians and Polynesians, amongst whom they settled. The Canaanite was moreover a vigorous, warlike being. He will, therefore, assuredly by physical and moral superiority, soon have acquired an ascendancy over the barbarous tribes where he domesticated himself. That these Syrians were prone to subdue others to their iniquities, that there was danger of infection from contact with them, is proved by God having deemed it right, as it may be presumed, to remove Jacob and his children from their perpetual inheritance into another land to preserve them from it, until the Canaanites should have provoked extermination. And that they were eager, daring, crafty, and able propagators of their detestable rites and practices, is but too evident from the astounding fact that the forewarned, chosen instruments of God's vengeance upon them for their abominations, unrestrained by the most powerful motives of love and fear and interest, fell perpetually victims to the seductions to their heinous offences, which were wrought by the feeble remnants of the Canaanites who escaped their swords.

In this curious and interesting inquiry one thing is certain. The Australians and Polynesians have in full vigour to this day Arabian circumcision and usages peculiar to the Canaanites, and over an immense surface of the globe, whilst they give no indications of having received the reli-

gions of Boodh or of Bramah, whose idolatries have ruled from most remote periods over a vast extent of the earth in neighbouring India and the adjacent territories. It has been shewn that they must have carried those rites and usages with them from their earlier, whence they dispersed, into their present seats. The facts are unquestionable as to the existence of those rites and usages in those two nations. The main difficulty was to account for the manner in which it happened, that Canaanitish observances could be conveyed to them, for it is sufficiently easy to explain through what means they received circumcision. A theory explanatory of how this was effected is now offered ; and it appears to be invested with the highest degree of probability, where demonstration is of course impossible ; and it answers all objections. Be it well observed, that it is Holy Writ alone which offers the solution of this knotty problem ; accept it, and it is complete. It is a very striking confirmation of the truth of the Mosaic record, that through it you discover in these, the latest days after the flood, a new and clear light upon what would otherwise be entirely dark and perplexing in the circumstances of nations spread over a vast portion of the globe ; and you find far more than distinct traces, you obtain actual multiplied remains in full observance of circumcision as performed on Ishmael, and of two Canaanitish forbidden usages, all as described in Scripture.

There may now be stated, as in natural connexion with the matter last treated, a suspicion, that since a decided influence of Canaanitish usages, and observances on those of the Australians and Polynesians is traced, and the channels, by which it was communicated, indicated, that influence may have been extended still farther, and not only over their customs, but their morals. In two other instances, their graceful and complicated dances, and the great licentiousness of the women amongst the Australians, and the primitive

Polynesians, these Syrians may well have been their instructors.

With the Australians, the skill and complication of the dances seem to be beyond all keeping with their barbarous and comfortless state. The dance in a state of high perfection is the child of ease, wealth, and high luxury: these savages often pass whole nights in rapturous devotion to it. The women are the musicians. Mr. Eyre says, "It is surprising to see the perfect time that is kept in this way," (which he describes,) "and the admirable manner in which the motions of the dance accord with the music. There is no confusion, irregularity, or mistake. Each person is conversant with his part; and all exhibit a degree of elasticity and gracefulness in their movements, which in some of the dances is very striking and beautiful." On one occasion he saw five tribes meet to dance, "each performing in turn," about forty men being employed in the performance at once, besides sixteen women. In one district he saw a dance, "which would have drawn down thunders of applause at any theatre in Europe."

As to the Polynesian dances, those of Tahiti must be familiar to all who are versed in the descriptions of them, which we receive from its early visitors, and from Cook especially; and he gives an interesting account of the *Heivas*, dances performed by numbers of both sexes in the Friendly Islands with singular skill, precision, and regularity. A striking representation of one of them is to be found in the plates in his last voyage.

Here are the partial traces of a luxurious civilisation certainly not generally attained by either of these races, but far least by the Australians; whilst the Canaanites, a people devoted to the pleasures of the senses, occupying a fertile soil, and enjoying a fine climate, and great commercial wealth, may most reasonably be conjectured to have been amongst the foremost to



bring the dance to perfection, in scenic representations, and in social amusements.

The immorality of the women in these two races is brought into view, because as it exists in Australia, and did exist in Polynesia, it certainly surpasses that usually found in uncivilised nations. It is to be observed, that Mr. Eyre has, on all points of morals in Australia, come forward in upholding the character of the natives ably and humanely, as far as truth would justify, as he has advocated their claims and interests, which have a demand on our strongest compassion. We may therefore be sure, that no statement of his to their disadvantage is exaggerated. We learn from him therefore with pain, since we must believe him, "that marriage is not looked upon as any pledge of chastity; indeed no such virtue is exercised." He adds in a Latin note, that the women give themselves up to dissoluteness nearly the whole of their lives; that in many of the tribes there is an indiscriminate illicit intercourse between the young of the two sexes.

The records of the immorality of the Polynesian women, as witnessed by their early European visitors, are but too numerous and authentic, and they are too well known to require more than a reference on a subject unpleasant to treat. Wallis's, Cook's, and Bougamville's descriptions of the morals of Tahiti, and of the other Society Islands, Vancouver's of those of the Sandwich Islands, La Perouse's of those of the Navigators Islands, and Cook's of those of the Marquesas, are in all hands. And since some of the Canaanites must have found their way to these two races, and influenced their observances, it is but too probable that these Syrians, fearfully vicious, as the Bible largely attests, did, besides their dances, carry their sensual and excessive immorality in dire contagion into the bosom of these infant



nations, where it still exereises its ravages, even amongst the purer sex.

These dances, and this immorality of the women, which assumes a decidedly national character in these two distinct races, must have prevailed generally amongst them before either of them quitted their homes, whence they went to occupy their present seats. They could by neither race have been adopted by concert and consent at a later period. The frequent immensity of separation between Australian tribes in a land, through a very great part of which to travel is almost impossible, and between Polynesian islands, renders even internal intercourse in many cases impracticable, as has been stated respecting circumcision. As to Polynesia, this will be at once perceived on seeing the relative positions of some of the largest groups, as the Society, the Friendly, and the Sandwich Islands, and New Zealand, all of whose inhabitants, as we first found them, had nothing but open canoes for navigation. Again, measure the distance from east to west from the Caroline Islands to Easter Island, from north to south from the Sandwich Islands to New Zealand, and judge this matter. There is a curious proof in each case of a strange dispersion of each people. In Australia, as has been stated, there was originally one common language; yet such has been the long and great separation of tribes, that the language of many parts of that continent is wholly unintelligible in others; and yet, through the wanderings of the natives in that vast and desolate land, portions of its population, which difference of speech proves to have been for ages divided, occasionally again come into vicinity with each other with perfectly discordant tongues; yet there are other tribes which understand the speech of others far distant, whose neighbours they must have formerly been.

Thus in Polynesia the dialects perhaps the most intelligible to each other of separate insular tribes are those of Tahiti and

New Zealand, with so wide a space of sea between them.

But in Australia, besides the evidence of strange separation deduced from speech, is given that of large districts alternating, in which circumcision prevails or is unknown.

As to the three usages held in common, surely if we found existing in any one land usages which neither the reason of man, nor his wants or necessities suggest, and which are painful, we might say that if one of them was discovered in another country, the coincidence might be accidental, that each people might have devised it without concert with another, and unconscious of its having been previously invented; if we should hear of coincidence in two such peculiar usages, we should greatly doubt its being casual; and if we heard of three such, we should entirely deny it on all doctrine of chances. But if there are two nations occupying a vast space of the earth and sea, each holding these peculiar usages, all question of casual coincidence is at an end. It must be admitted that they must have been taken from without themselves, or they must have communicated them to others holding them. But the two people so circumstanced neither hold, or have ever held, intercourse with each other; for until the other day each was unknown to the other nations of the earth; and, therefore, not holding them from each other, they must have received and held them from some other nation, which, situated as they are, must have been one navigating in decked ships in very early ages of the world. Then, as to the Australians, from all that has been premised, it is evident that he is not a new man; that he is thus clearly brought into connexion by good and bad with the rest of the human race, descending, like it, from the fallen Adam.

A history of the spread of circumcision naturally divides

itself, both as to time and operations, into two parts, separated by ages from each other. The first part embraces a period from the circumcision of Ishmael to the days when the Arabs ceased to have the exclusive commerce of the Erythrean Sea, when it is probable that their eager spirit of proselytism to that rite became extinct, together with their maritime supremacy in those waters. This period it might be difficult to fix; but it is enough to say, where greater accuracy is not needed, that we find Solomon's navy navigating in and no doubt beyond the Red Sea, piloted by Tyrian sailors, about nine hundred years after Ishmael was ejected from his father's tent. This commercial expedition of the Israelites was about one thousand years B. C.; and the Hegira, which is with the Moslems the religious epoch, whence they date, took place A. D. 622. Soon after that epoch, the Arabs gave the commencement of the second period of the spread of circumcision, by compelling the adoption of it by the inhabitants of the vast regions which received the Koran, as the mark of their subjection to the yoke of the false prophet. But the facts of that period are of notoriety, and need no investigation.\*

In the present epoch of circumcision we find the Arab, whilst recognising it, the Israelite's as well as his own, as standing on scriptural grounds, yet now maintaining it against Jew and Gentile as the badge of a religion which, he tells us, supersedes the laws of Moses and of Christ in virtue of a later revelation. But as a victorious Mahometan, he robs the Hebrew, not only of his spiritual inheritance, but occupies widely his territorial in a large extent of the land of Canaan, and has given his language to all Syria. But it should be said, that he is not the only despoiler of the

---

\* Dr. Asahel Grant speaks of the Yezidees in Chaldea as being circumcised. From his account, this extraordinary sect, supposed to be worshippers, of the devil, holds a strange religion, probably compounded in part from Judaism and Christianity.

heritage of Israel ; there is another, who is no less a person than the so-called spiritual interpreter of Scripture, whose erroneous apprehensions of it have damaged sorely the cause of Christianity amongst the Hebrews, especially as denying their national restoration to the land of Canaan. So much has been effected in refutation of this error, and greatly by yourself, that I confine myself to one, but a decisive argument against it, grounded on the institution of circumcision.

The covenant prescribed by God between himself and Abraham and his seed, (in the line of promise,) as recorded in Genesis, (xvii.,) is that he would give them the land in which Abraham was “ a stranger, all the land of Canaan, *for an everlasting possession.*” His covenant, which they were to keep for ever, was, that every man child should be circumcised on the eighth day, this rite being a token of it. The uncircumcised Israelites were to be cut off; but the covenant was declared to be *in their flesh for an everlasting covenant*, one which of course could not be annihilated.

Now God is so far from making this covenant so as to render it susceptible of being construed as universal, that he not only limits it to the family of Abraham, but to a single branch of it, Isaac's. But the figurative interpretation, in order to make “ all one in Christ,” both converts the gift of a certain portion of the earth into a spiritual blessing, and appropriates it to the universal church. Now when two parties make an agreement, a treaty, to be in good faith, they must mean the same things as to the objects of it. Two things are spoken and treated of in this covenant, and both, according to the plain sense of the words, thus : land, earth is to be given by one party, and flesh is to be cut by the other. No one will deny that the second part of the covenant was literally fulfilled by a bloody rite (as Zipporah's words signify). But will any one venture to aver that God, in plain words, promising a physical gift, without warning



Abraham that he was speaking and dealing figuratively, did really so act, whilst Abraham understood the compact to be literal, and literally fulfilled it, and yet was not warned by God of his mistake, if it was one? Again, God told him that the covenant "should be in his flesh," and in his flesh he literally fulfilled it, also unwarned of error. The spiritualiser makes one party, and that party God, to speak literally, but to mean figuratively, whilst the other party speaks literally, and understands and acts literally. But again, did Abraham understand, at a far later period of his life, that the land of Canaan was literally given to him? Consult his words, addressed to his eldest servant, when he sent him to seek for a wife for Isaac. "The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall, &c." (Genesis xxiv. 7.) In these words Abraham speaks of two lands, that "of his kindred," and that promised to his seed by God under an oath, Palestine. He unquestionably speaks here of the land of his kindred in a physical sense, for we know that God removed him in the body from it; he therefore, in all common sense and on all principles of reasoning, must be understood as having meant by the promised land that of Canaan, where he was living in the body, which thus stands as an inducement to the alliance to be proposed, as a consideration in the contemplated marriage settlement.

If our own senses, and the literal sense of words were not and are not our sure guides in a covenant, as to its interpretation, what other can we have? I have that guidance, and the spiritualiser has no other than the opinions, the conjectures of men, which may vary *ad infinitum*. He means it not; but the truth of God is thus dishonoured by his conclusions

There is another view of circumcision which should not



be omitted as bearing upon the prospects of the Church. We know that the reception into it of Israel "will be life from the dead." It is evident from Scripture, that the accession of Israel to the number of the faithful will be the era of a wonderful and glorious extension of the truth that is in Jesus, and that the Jews are to be the distinguished instruments of conveying it to the unconverted nations. We know, that "ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." (Zechariah viii. 23.) In the first miraculous draught of fishes the net brake, and in the second it did not; and not one of the large fishes with which it was full escaped; in both the fishermen were Jews.

Let it be now considered whether we are sufficiently advanced in the progress of conversion to form an opinion, if any peculiar branch of it is reserved by the Most High for the Christian Jew. The missionary of the Gospel, whose feet have trodden of late a considerable portion of the earth, has nowhere, that I am aware of, failed utterly of success where he had fair access to the object of his labours, but amongst the Mahometans. With the Moslems there is so unvarying and perfect an obduracy, that I have long been convinced, that the attempt to evangelise them now is useless, that there exists some invisible but insuperable impediment. I stated lately this opinion of the fruitlessness of the endeavour to convert the Mahometans to two men eminently qualified to judge the question, one a distinguished missionary of long and well-tried experience in eastern countries, the other a resident for many years amongst Moslems, and both concurred entirely in that opinion. The Mahometans, taking their religion from the Arabs, and believing in the Old Tes-

tament, reproach the Jew as deservedly punished for sinning against what they call "the Book;" and of course they recognise his circumcision as a heavenly rite. Under these circumstances of these two bodies of religionists, it may be well to consult a passage in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel (v. 23—25). The Lord spake thus: "I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned amongst the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," &c. Thus the heathen shall know the Lord, shall renounce all false for the only true religion, when they see Israel restored to its own land, and sanctifying God, that is, serving him with an holy and acceptable worship, which can be none but through the Lord Jesus Christ, and when this is done before their eyes. Then who are the heathen, who have the land of Canaan immediately under their eyes? They are the great Mahometan powers and regions, Turkey, Persia, Syria, Arabia, and Egypt. And this passage distinctly foreshews, that when the standard of the cross shall be reared in the land of his fathers by the hand of the Israeliish soldier of Christ, then shall be dissolved that fearful spell of the Koran, under which the Greek empire was subverted, and Christianity extirpated over a vast extent of the earth, under which also uncounted millions have been held for ages and ages under the yoke of a false, proud, malignant, and intolerant religion, whose fruits have been rebellion against God, depravity, ferocity, and ignorance, a degrading and debasing spiritual and temporal despotism, and the depopulation and desolation of immense regions once magnificent in fertility and beauty.

The Mahometans, but especially the Arabs, who deem the Jews to be deservedly exiled from their land under disobedience to the precepts of "The Book," and under the threats recorded in it, have before their eyes the promises of their restoration to the land of Canaan as its lords and possessors, when turning to God in thorough contrition, if accepted repentance. Then when their restoration is accomplished, even supposing no such events to take place leading to it, and achieving it, as may denote an unwonted interposition of heavenly power, the Moslems, impressed as their minds are respecting the destinies of the Jews, and seeing the restitution of a people so scattered, powerless, and degraded in their estimation, will naturally and earnestly inquire, what that repentance was, which led to such wonderful results, to such an astonishing deliverance; and they will see the Almighty placing his stamp on the truth of Christianity, since it is on the solemn and national acknowledgment by Israel of Jesus Christ as its Lord and Redeemer, in whom all the prophecies of its Messiah are accomplished, that God will restore its tribes to the inheritance of their fathers. Whether there may then befall those Mahometans awful judgments from the Lord, inspiring terror, leading them to repentance, and softening their obdurate hearts, or may not, still the irresistible testimony thus borne to the veracity of Holy Writ by stupendous events occurring in their sight, must operate irresistible conviction in their hearts, that there is no other name through which they can be saved but that of Christ, through whom will be largely poured down before the wondering heathen such unspeakable and multiplied blessings, which God reserves for pardoned and restored Israel, as can only be fitly portrayed in the language of inspiration. It is in this state of things that the Jew and the Mahometan will find a bond of union in that sacred rite, which God ordained to Abraham, and which

the Mahometans have so long made the token of a religion cruelly oppressive over, and hostile to the brethren of Ishmael.

In relation to the rite of circumcision, and to the Canaanitish observances of cuttings in the flesh, and printing marks on the body, there is a view of the subject, which is distinct from those which have hitherto been offered. We have to carry in mind the very peculiar circumstances in which we find the land of Canaan to have stood before God, when Abraham was summoned by him from his home to that foreign country by an especial command, and evidently for some great purpose of the Lord. God, who deigned to designate him as his friend, gave to him and to his seed the land in which he was only a sojourner, so doing by a covenant, of which circumcision was the token. But it was at that time possessed by the Canaanites, who at an early period were a fearfully wicked race, as the iniquities, which provoked the destruction of the cities of the plain, amply testify. This country, from the time of Abraham's arrival in it, became the scene of wonderful dealings of the Almighty with him and his descendants, and in their favour, transacted at times by immediate communications from the Lord. His transplantation by the hand of God to that beautiful land, and the extraordinary manifestations of protection vouchsafed to him and his family, could not have been looked upon without mistrust and apprehension by the unholy Canaanites; nor could they have seen their splendid cities destroyed by the avenging fire of heaven without jealousy, when the nephew of Abraham and his daughters were miraculously preserved in that tremendous catastrophe. How accurately those Syrians observed the heavenly interpositions and dealings of that day, is proved by the Phœnician colonies having carried to Greece some of their most marked features, which she adopted in her mythological



stories, as the visit of the three men to Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the interrupted sacrificing of Isaac, all travestied, but easy of recognition in the Hellenic fables\* of the history of Hyreius visited by three gods, the war of the giants, and Iphigenia in Aulis. As these Syrians therefore knew in much detail these interpositions of the Almighty, it may be conjectured that they were even aware, that the fertile region which they inhabited was assigned by him to Abraham and his seed. They certainly knew it in aftertimes before Joshua's invasion, and at least forty years earlier, as appears from the song of Moses, and the children of Israel. But we find Abraham speaking of it to his eldest servant in a passage already cited. If the Syrians therefore had their attention, and no doubt painfully, drawn to heavenly dispensations holding an unusual and peculiarly marked course, now appalling to the wicked, now singling out a righteous man and his family as the objects of extraordinary favour and protection, we cannot but be convinced, that one who will have beheld these wonderful things with far keener, and more jealous eyes, their Master, the Prince of the Air, will have been roused thereby to the most strenuous exertions to maintain his threatened rule over such devoted subjects. That province, indeed, since the Deluge passed away, has been the scene of the most astonishing mercies, and of the most awful judgments of the Almighty; and there the great enemy has excited his slaves to the most daring rebellions—most foul and deadly offences against the majesty of heaven. There was ruined man redeemed by the blood of Christ; there was that blood shed by murderers, who were his brethren. There were all the nations of the Canaanites extirpated, and the

---

\* See Scriptural Researches.



people of God invested with their inheritance. Thence were the ten Tribes led into a captivity, in which they lie entombed to this very day. Thence was Judah dragged for a time to its Babylonish imprisonment. There was it restored, with its walls and temple rebuilt through heavenly mercy. And as it was there that the Son of man was put to a cruel and shameful death by his brethren in the flesh, there, in vengeance for that horrible offence, were Judea laid desolate, after an unparalleled slaughter of its population, Jerusalem annihilated after unheard of sufferings of its inhabitants, and the Jews utterly dispersed and driven fugitives to every region of the earth. And prophecy foreshews events in futurity, some of the most blessed and glorious, some of the most appalling nature, which the Syrian earth is to witness. But there were devices of Satan in Abraham's day, which stand on record, and which attest, how craftily and earnestly he put forth his strength to frustrate the purposes of heaven. I shall advert to two of them, as they are within the scope of my subject. The object of these devices was to lead the Canaanites in one instance to practices offensive and abhorrent to God, in the other to the cruellest and most unnatural idolatry; and these acts of rebellion are palpably founded upon dispensations and ordinances of God, so as to involve the Canaanites in the insolence of mockery and imitation in these outrages against the Lord. God ordained circumcision for all wise purposes, a bloody rite performed by cutting the flesh, and marking the body of the Israelite as one of the people of God. Satan inspired the Canaanites to make bloody cuttings of the flesh for the dead, and to print marks on the body. The Almighty ordained a deed, the interrupted sacrifice of Isaac, signifying typically, that he would give his own Son to actual death in the flesh for our redemption, the most stupendous of the mercies of our heavenly Father. And Satan presented as a

sort of counterpart to it the immolation in the flames of their children, which the Canaanites performed to Moloch, the deadliest of their crimes, that which, as it appears probable, filled up the measure of that guilt, for which the Lord avenged himself by their utter destruction. But in all things the hand of Satan is heavy. The observances which he, as it were, set up against circumcision were attended with incomparably greater bodily suffering than is caused by the performance of that rite. Nor are we so framed by the all-merciful Creator, that the heart of the most infatuated idolater should not be pierced by the agonising cries of his child, when he committed him to the flames in honour of the "grisly king."

Having thus far dealt with it as to the past, it is a question as to circumcision in the future, how the Israelites will, as a nation, be circumstanced respecting it in their occupation of Palestine, and whether it will be required of them. For reasons already stated, it cannot be supposed to have been ordained as a physical improvement of the human frame, such as it was created by God, and tenanted by Adam. If it could by any supposition be conjectured to lead to moral improvement, why was it dispensed with as to the Gentile converts? Both Jews and Gentiles were purified by baptism with water and with the Holy Ghost under the new law. And St. Peter, when proposing that circumcision should not be enforced amongst the Gentiles, expresses himself thus: "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them (the Gentiles) witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts xv. 8, 9.)

But if we inquire whether there has been, or indeed can be, any abrogation of that covenant in the flesh of the Israelite, which God declared to be everlasting, assuredly we find none; and if our Lord Jesus Christ assumes a per-

sonal reign over restored Israel, that covenant, to which he was subjected in the flesh in his infancy, will unquestionably remain unbroken by him as well as by every descendant from Jacob. But as the enforcement of such perpetual conformity to the Abrahamic rite might be said to be proved by such an irresistible example alone, we have to consider the ground of belief in such a personal reign; and even an unlearned layman may do it unhesitatingly, for the subject is enveloped in no mystery, unless it be in one created by fantastic interpretation. One single passage of inspiration in proof of it may perhaps be received as decisive. If there is marvel here, besides mystery, it surely exists in the fact, that the minds of men are startled at a doctrine, which appears to afford the necessary completion of the design and purpose of that stupendous dispensation of heavenly mercy through Jesus Christ, the object of which is to restore lost and fallen men to his original righteousness; and this can be effected by Christ alone, our Mediator and Redeemer, the second Adam, he "who will render unto man his righteousness." (Job xxxiii. 23—26.) But the restoration of man to the position, to the blessedness, from which the first Adam fell, has never yet been accomplished; he has never yet reigned over the earth in righteousness, as the first Adam did ere he transgressed. The glories of that reign are still future; and they can emanate alone from the throne of the last Adam, "the second man, the Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. xv. 47.) Adam is thus declared by Scripture to be a type of Christ; but such he can only possibly be in his first character, that of reigning over the earth in righteousness before the fall. To be the antitype, to fulfil this type, as well as to complete the heavenly dispensation for our restoration, some one in the human nature, some man, must, after Adam, reign as he at first did, that is, in perfect righteousness, over the

earth ; but so to reign can be done by one man alone, " the man Christ Jesus." But hitherto he has not held an universal reign in the flesh ; in it, indeed, he has held no earthly rule. His dominion, therefore, as the Son of man, over the whole world is still future, but must of necessity, upon the scriptural grounds thus stated, take place. He left the earth in the possession of exulting and apparently successful foes. The triumph of the Son of man, God in the flesh, is wholly incomplete until his enemies are subjected, and he rules as the second Adam, as the universal king, in righteousness, but holding, according to all prophecy, more immediate dominion over Israel.

But the scriptural proof of the future personal reign of our Lord particularly referred to is as follows : — We learn from St. Luke's gospel the following circumstances. The angel Gabriel made an heavenly annunciation to a virgin, of the name of Mary, betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, in these words : " Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David ; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke ii. 31—33.)

Here six facts are predicated :—1. That she, a virgin, should conceive and bring forth a son ; 2. That she should call his name Jesus ; 3. That he should be great ; 4. That he should be called the Son of the Highest ; 5. That God should give him the throne of his father David ; 6. That he should reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that " of his kingdom there shall be no end."

The first of these facts announced was a miracle, her conception ; and the subsequent proved it to be a miracle of stupendous mercy. Now no one can be the recipient of a



miracle of mercy unless he receives and embraces it in faith. When our Lord forgave the sins of the woman, who anointed his feet, he said, "Thy faith hath saved thee." In his own country, "he did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief." When he healed the centurion's servant, he told the Roman, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." At first Mary, astounded at the wonderful communication, expressed an intelligible doubt, that is, respecting the miraculous conception announced; but the heavenly messenger vouchsafed to relieve her from it, by explaining to her the preternatural manner in which it should be effected, and by stating to her the miraculous conception of her cousin Elizabeth, with which she must have been acquainted. (Luke i. 7, 13.) On this, she yielded her faith, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it to me according to thy word." But on what was she to rest her faith? what divine was there at hand, as from the schools of Oxford or of Cambridge, to lead her to believe, that the heavenly message was not what it appeared to be in the plain literal sense of the words? A preternatural apparition, but one which her senses assured her was a real one, had announced to her a preternatural, but physical fact, in order to remove her doubt; and she knew it to be true; and of course very soon after she knew, that the miraculous conception foretold to herself, a physical fact, had taken place; and in succession she knew of her son's birth, his name, and his incipient greatness, for whilst she was close at hand, he rose conqueror of death, and sin, and ascended into heaven; she knew that the devils proclaimed him to be Christ the Son of God, (Luke v. 41;) that the Centurion who guarded his cross declared him to be the Son of God; and that he himself avowed himself to be "the Christ, the Son of the blessed;" that the voice of God had twice proclaimed him to



be his Son. Her life closed before the other predictions of the angel could be accomplished, those regarding his future and eternal reign over Israel. But she did know, that heavenly messengers announced at his ascension, that he should return from "heaven in like manner" as he had risen from the earth, in the flesh therefore; and she herself probably heard them so speak.

Mary had yielded her faith on the plain literal statement of a miraculous fact, which she knew to be true; she saw all the facts announced to her, which occurred during her life, happening according to the literal prophetic description. Is not there the plainest implication of the truth of that heavenly Father, who had dealt so graciously with her, that the assurances given to her, but unfulfilled before her death, on which she acted in their plainest sense, should have the same rule of interpretation that the fulfilled had; for what other rule could this Jewish maiden dream of? and if she had at any time dreamed of another, she must have abandoned it, when she saw that all the assurances, that could be accomplished in her lifetime, were literally accomplished; we hear of no warning to her, that whilst more than half—all she could see fulfilled—were real, the others prefigured something else. But what was this something else? could she guess it? was it defined? could it, as unintelligible to her, have any influence on her faith? Could the allwise God have offered her a boon unexplained, and which, being incomprehensible to her, could have no value in her eyes? If the things promised do not mean what they profess to mean, what sense have they? all that can be done by the spiritualiser is, that each man shall explain them according to his own fancies; the only sure rule of interpretation is taken away; and if we make it a reproach to our professors of medicine, that "doctors differ," is there none for doctors of divinity, who,

after subverting our faith in the literal interpretation, cannot but differ to the end of time as to what particular substitute they should offer, as it is of obvious impossibility that they should agree on any sure and certain one? Who is to lift the veil from off such assurances, if they are rendered vague and undefined? As the facts stand, Mary, under a heavenly communication of various assurances, was permitted, even led in divers manners, in which there could be no mistake, to believe in their plainest sense in these assurances; and when she died, she knew of necessity that she had rightly understood them so far, by such accomplishment of such as occurred in her time, as her senses testified. Then the spiritualiser, as he is termed, must assume that after her decease the literal fulfilment was to cease, superseded by another, which she could neither suspect or foresee, and which, had she been alive, she could not have understood. But indeed the first understanding was to rule the whole matter. Terms agreed on by two parties cannot be altered but by mutual consent. And here a most material and decisive observation is to be made. To obtain a change of terms in a contract duly concluded you must offer a full equivalent for the condition, which you desire to be altered or abandoned. In this case all equivalent was absolutely impossible. Who was to compensate Mary, by any imaginable conditions, by any substitute, for the promised blessedness and glories of the Messiah's reign, which seem to beam from the words which predict them? I dare not particularise the conclusions to which we must come on such premises; the very thought of them utterly condemns the figurative interpretation as impossible to be true. The most earnest spiritualiser must recoil from such a construction, as, if his views are traced to their final effect, he must arrive at respecting the character of the conduct towards helpless and miserable man, held by the all-wise almighty God, who so loved us, that he gave his Son to

die for us, aye—held even in the outset, in the very groundwork of that stupendous dispensation of his mercy.

It would be a very feeble defence of a figurative interpretation to say that Mary must have seen that it would have been an extravagant and unfounded supposition on her part that her Son was to reign as the son of David over Israel for ever. But the exact contrary was undoubtedly the case. She must have been rightly and perfectly sure that such was his glorious destination, independently of the conviction derived from the assurance to that effect given by the angel Gabriel. She knew that God had promised to David that he would establish the kingdom of one of his seed, saying moreover “He shall build an house for my name; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father and he shall be my son.” (2 Samuel viii. 12—14.) She knew that her son was of the lineage of David; she knew that he himself had declared himself to be the Son of God; she knew of an heavenly voice which twice, at his baptism and his transfiguration, thus spoke of him when present: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;” she knew that he had risen from the grave, had ascended to heaven in the flesh, and was to return from it in the flesh; (Acts i. 9—11;) she knew that Christ was sitting “at the right hand of God;” (Col. i. 3, and Ephesians i. 20;) she knew, still more, that Christ had announced to his enemies “that they should see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, coming in the clouds of heaven.” (Mark xiv. 62.) She therefore knew that no one but her son could be he whose future reign in Zion was thus foretold: “The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” (Psalm cx. 1, 2.) As our Lord is further described

as sitting at the right hand of God, he is necessarily here described as in the flesh; as God he is over the universe. The "footstool" denotes a support of the throne; in this case it is to be given by his enemies, that is, by the Jews; that word therefore, and the mention of "Zion" would alone have taught her, who his future subjects were to be. Her knowledge of all these prophecies must have taught her also, that her Son alone could fulfil them.

If I may appear to have expressed myself over earnestly respecting the restoration of Israel to the land of promise, and the personal reign of our Lord, as to the construction to be given to passages in Scripture referring to those matters, whether it shall be literal or figurative, I must plead in my vindication the great importance of the subject, and of clearing away all doubts obscuring it. The acceptance of the Gospel by Israel will be as a revival of the world from a state of death;\* and that this acceptance is certain, no Christian man, I presume, denies. It must take place. Now there is no doubt that the prevalence of the figurative interpretation still withholds many, and has greatly withheld men in times past, from undertaking to preach the Gospel to the Hebrews. They neither felt their own interests, nor, if I may so say, the part, the sacred part, which the Almighty vouchsafes to take, and has always taken in this matter. They may now influence the effects of that preaching in two ways;—by withholding their aid, or by offering it in a shape which will be perfectly unavailing. The figurative interpreter is excluded either by himself or by the Jew, from all participation in the evangelism of Israel. No power has ever weakened, or can, or will, or, in truth, ever should weaken in the mind and heart of the Israelite, who is quite as inflexible as his

---

\* Rom. xi. 15.



ancestors were, the conviction that he will resume the inheritance of his fathers, and that his Messiah will, as a descendant of David, bear a glorious and deathless rule over the twelve tribes "in the land upon the mountains of Israel." The figurative interpreter may perhaps act as a feeble drag-chain on the wheels of the triumphal car of Israel in its thundering career; but he cannot arrest it. There has been no variation from the recognition of a literal interpretation offered by a learned Jew in any age. The denier of it, he charges with either ill-will, or injustice, or want of intellect, or ignorance. But his heart is warmed and opened to the Christian who advocates the national restoration and the personal reign of the Messiah. His main difficulties, both in his feelings and in his understanding, are overcome; and this every missionary to the Jews will testify.

I am aware that I have been treading in dark and intricate paths; but it was in the hope that they might lead to light upon a subject deserving of investigation, which was involved in some obscurity. I am aware, also, that there are matters of such vital importance now agitating powerfully the public mind on the dearest interests of religion, and of national and individual weal, that men could with difficulty be led to turn their eyes to objects, which seem foreign to those which excite and engage their utmost solitudes. Nor can he, who thus strives to draw attention to very early scriptural history, escape his full share of these solitudes, which equally interfere with, and discourage from, and enfeeble such attempts. Indeed, without venturing to assign dates in the prophetic writings, I cannot but recognize a succession of predicted events which appear awfully to mark our present place in their series. The national councils, directed by whatever party, and with alarming disregard to the warnings of revelation, have

directed their efforts as anxiously, as fruitlessly, in the endeavour to propitiate, to sway, to appease, and to satisfy a church, which is implacable, immutable, inexorable, and insatiable, as its laws and principles, as well as its practice, for ages demonstrate. And whilst there exists in our very camp a defection to that church, more or less avowed, which fills the Protestant both with grief and consternation, and with surprise and astonishment, that such a thing can be, we appear to act as if courting a participation in those plagues decreed against Babylon the Great, which the voice of God, issuing in mercy from heaven, calls upon his people to fly. And if we have so far abused that mercy, as to be given up to judicial blindness, it is not easy to mistake our position in the predicted history of the latter times, or of those immediately preceding them. That God may still lead into the paths of peace, but above all with Him, our most merciful and heavenly Father, through Christ our Lord and Redeemer, this our beloved country, which he has so wonderfully favoured, is, I well know, as much your fervent and anxious prayer, as it is of him who is most faithfully yours,

G. H. ROSE.

## APPENDIX.





## A P P E N D I X.

---

A SUCCINCT view will now be taken of a matter which, as not connected with the subject of the preceding letter, will be treated separately ; but it is noticed because it stands in immediate relation to others which have been brought under consideration, and, like them, it affords evidence of the Australians having a common origin with the rest of the human race ; and that evidence cannot be rejected on the ground of its resting on a farther proof of the depravity of the unrenewed heart of man. It furnishes, moreover, a fresh instance of community of practices prevailing amongst the Australians and the Polynesians, which they must have adopted before their migrations from their ancient to their present seats ; for, as has been stated, they neither have, or ever could have had, any communication with each other.

The matter now in question is cannibalism, an abomination so utterly execrable as to baffle all power to delineate faithfully its enormity, The rebellion against God in the nature and extent of evil was so prevalent in Syria, and at so early an age, that it appeared to be the cradle of unholiness ; so that one is almost surprised not to find man-eating in the catalogue of their offences enumerated in the Mosaic

Record. We may be sure, therefore, that this guilt could not lie to the charge of the Canaanites, as practised or taught by them to others. But from whatever source it may have been derived, the Australians and Polynesians are still deeply infected with this dreadful iniquity; and if their original examples and authorities for their practice of it be sought for, they may be found in a country, from which their primitive seats could have been at no considerable distance. It still prevails amongst the Battas in the island of Sumatra. Indeed it appears by ancient history that it prevailed amongst various other nations of the old world; and a new link is thus furnished of a chain, of diabolical workmanship it is true, which connects the Australians with the other tribes of man.

A conjecture may here be offered, such as one of those presented respecting the Syrian observances of cuttings for the dead, and of tattooing. When, after the deluge, the Almighty gave to man the flesh of animals for his food, it seems highly probable that Satan devised a new machination in order to turn to evil the bounty of God, and to lead his own subjects to an unheard of wickedness by a malignantly counterfeiting an heavenly beneficence. It could be he alone who inspired the human race with the horrible desire to seek sustenance in the bodies of their fellow-creatures, and thus gave them an impulse to war, and to deeds of blood till then unknown.

The existence of cannibalism in Australia has been stated; and it is notorious that it prevails in the Polynesian islands, as the highest authorities attest. It is in full vigour in the Feejee islands, where a victorious chief is stated to have held within these few years a banquet, where the bodies of a fearful number of men, and as many hogs, were laid upon his festive board, alternating with each other. Man-eating was universal in New Zealand, and is still rife amongst its

heathen inhabitants. It is decidedly imputed to the unbaptized Sandwich Islanders. We are told by Krusenstern, that in the Washington islands, appertaining to the Marquesas group, a man in a famine butchers his wife and child to satisfy his hunger. It is said, moreover, that recently at the Marquesas the natives have devoured several of their new European masters. Cannibalism is not quite unknown at the Friendly Islands. And though it appears to have been extinct at Tahiti when Captain Cook first visited it, there was a distinct indication found of its having been practised there.

But where this most unnatural and horrible practice prevails, it spares neither age or sex. The Australian sorcerer, to obtain his credentials, and authority to exercise his functions, must, as has been said, have partaken of the flesh of a child and of an old man. The New Zealander prefers for his food a girl of about seventeen years of age; and a noted cannibal chief of the Battas declared, that the choice object of his appetite was a man whose hair was just beginning to turn grey. The Feejeeans, the New Zealanders, and others, subject the bodies of their victims to the action of fire. The Australian has been seen devouring the raw flesh, and drinking the blood of his fellow creatures. This occurred in an instance witnessed by a public officer, where a tribe fought with desperation against a superior force, to avenge the death of one of their women, and then so dealt with the body, as soon as the breath had quitted it. But whilst these enormities are recorded as a farther, but a melancholy proof of the consanguinity of the Australian to the other sons of Adam, it is done with the deepest feelings of pity for fellow-creatures so long wandering in utter darkness, so deplorably enthralled by the great enemy of man. This barbarian is not devoid of good qualities. But the fearful empire of the law of his customs, most ingeniously

contrived so as to depress and fetter his moral powers, and to pervert his feelings, must hold him in a state of savage mental slavery, until this diabolical spell is dissolved. It opposes a very powerful obstacle to the introduction of Christianity, which alone can afford the remedy to such complicated and inveterate evil. But we must also present to them in an acceptable shape the benefits of that civilisation, which is the handmaid of religion, and the arts essential to the comfort and well being of man. Whilst England has been especially called and qualified by God to diffuse the light of the Gospel over the dark regions of the earth, it has a peculiar duty to fulfil towards the Australians. We have to make reparation for our invasion and occupation of their territory, and for having in a great degree let loose upon them numbers of those, whom the tribunals of our country proscribed and banished in bondage to the homes of these helpless savages, to their serious detriment.

LONDON :

G. J. PALMER, PRINTER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

*o/s March/96*



o/s unbound March 1896  
bound July 96. - p/s

Nº 2412





